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from Saturday 27 August

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by David Harb

based on the book by William Hinton

directed by Richard Wharmell

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costumes Marea Fowler

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Roxlence, George Shevtsov, Stephen Thomas

'A major piece of theatre, a play without precedent in the history
of British theatre, engrossing and unmissable' — *The Guardian*,
London



Theatre

Australia

August 1977
Volume 2, Number 4

Departments	3	Comments Quotes and Quoties Letters
	7	Winters, Ramsay and Facts
	25	David Murr
	27	Guide: Theatre, Opera, Dance
Cartoon Special	8	<i>Two Years of Cartoon Theatre</i> Gloria Hutchison
	12	<i>The Mums Micks of Max Gellies</i> Cover Story by John Larkin
	22	<i>Cartoon Design</i> Peter Corrigan
Playscript	38	<i>Murvellous Melbourne — Part One</i> with an introduction by Jack Hibbard on 'How Murvellous Melbourne Came to Life'
Two Playwrights	48	Dorothy Hewitt discusses the plays of Patrick White on 'The White Phenomenon'
	66	International — Tondy Faylauer discusses the work of Ramon Maria del Valle Inclan 'A playwright ahead of his time'
Theatre Organisations	64	<i>M & J Carney Consultants</i> Dennis O'Brien
Ballet	61	<i>Australian Dance Theatre</i> William Skolchbridge
	63	<i>The Queensland Modern and Contemporary Dance Company</i> Don Batchelor
Opera	56	<i>The Coronation of Poppo</i> Adrian Slack
	70	<i>Savina</i> David Gyger
Theatre Reviews	26	New South Wales
	45	Queensland
	47	Victoria
	50	A.C.T.
	51	Western Australia
	54	South Australia
Film	72	Elizabeth Radcliff
Books	73	Helma van der Poorten
Records	74	Roger Corvill

#COMMENT#

This month is a time for double celebrations. Two candles for Carlton Theatre — so central to the new wave of Australian drama and all that has ensued — and one for Theatre Australia.

The two anniversaries are connected. The first production at La Mama, *Three Old Friends*, was written by Jack Hibberd and performed by Graham Marshall, David Kendall and Bruce Kneppert. Bruce was a founding editor and now Associate Editor of Theatre Australia, Jack and Graham are on the Advisory Board. But in the wider view it is the major change of the alternative becoming the accepted, of the fringe writers (that is Australian writers) becoming established playwrights and out-of-the-way theatres becoming mainstream that has given sufficient activity for a monthly magazine to record. And a publication which can be national without being mainly patronic, which can have many new persons indigenous content without being parochial.



Like the development of theatre generally in this country, perhaps, the magazine began looking too much to English models. Like the theatre it now has its own unique style, character and format. But like the theatre it took a certain self-consciousness and faith to make a work.

Before 1967 actors here were largely dissuaded from speaking their own tongue despite the enormous impact of *The Wolf*. The rage then, as now in many ways, was dominated by the practice of the old country. The National Theatre in Perth has just appointed an Englishman as Artistic Director, and though the MTC did many local plays, a new measure similar to Lowrie's triumph was needed.

It came from a group of people working at La Mama — most university contemporaries: Hibberd, Kennard, Burt, Oakley and later Williamson proved the local show again to be as dramatic as the new road mode. It took other generosity and a Shakespeare in England, a Goethe in Germany and a Pushkin in Russia to make similar advances. In this issue we publish *Melbourne Melbourne* magnificently group edited, though first penned by Hibberd and Kennard. The first publication of the play to celebrate the first APG

production, and with a title that rings out the localised optimism of the time.

It is a socio-political material piece beginning a line which was to remove the foundation, if only momentarily, the observed fact, of APG programming over the subsequent ten years, as Gurne Hutchinson points out in his article. But if political consciousness in playwrighting opened the new wave, it was politics on the federal scale which concerned it. The failed hopes in *Don't Party* with the new men of the ALP in '68 became the triumph of '71. Now that all has seemingly settled back into the plain guiding of democracy (as though there are still demons here and there to be beaten up) the Whitlam era may look like a more Indian summer for the arts. Yet though some of the optimistic optimism has now declined, much was consolidated amidst the heady burgeoning activity of those years. What was rich and strange has become in many respects the norm.

There was non-commercial theatre in Melbourne before La Mama and the APG, but as the introduction to *Four Australian Plays* points out, the fostering and development of local drama was "most certainly not being fulfilled". The MTC, one fact and hope, no longer presents such works like "poor unwanted relations" (Molnar 1969), and it has always had a better record here than the Old Time, but a more conservative, safe, suburban-orientated — and highly successful financially. With its blue nose appeal, number of venues and scale of subsidy it dominates the theatrical life of the city. So establishment is it that notwithstanding the new blood of such talents as Mick Radder it can proudly advertise itself as Melbourne's 11th channel.

At the moment it seems to be yammering something of a critical onslaught. Via it the critics are doing ranko against it, such critics as sit without cause. One sees that the MTC has used its influence to get one Australian critic sacked on the grounds of varied interest, only to find that his replacement is the man who wrote the official history of the company. Name-dropping from glass houses is really not on. But the company can never support criticism based on anything other than honest response. If the critics are responding with prejudice, even if there is cause, professional pride should counsel them of the two wrongs adage.

In the 1960's *The Wolf* team had run out of steam. The APG was created when one line of writing and performance was in the doldrums. The years later what was new

wire now seems more like a dull pond. Now is the time for another measure. The MTC is in an unsustainably dominant position as non-commercial theatre, the APG is small, radical, and though doing some splendid work (playing in a memory theatre), what began as an alternative is now, as rampant but it, adding with the MTC to keep out other alternatives. John Hawkes of the APG goes on record as saying there were nine alternatives in 1968 then there are in 1973, so why the opposition to the emergence of *Hoopla*?

Sydney shows us, not that the two capitals should be served competitively, it surely healthier and more productive at the moment precisely because of the greater number of companies operating (and co-operating) there. Let's there be a seed, as Richard Wherrett has argued, for a Nureid-type theatre somewhere between the two existing groups now operating? As common past it, Melbourne has splended buildings but few companies where Sydney has splended companies but few buildings.

Hoopla must be tried in a significant middle way. With *Sergeants Frodo* announced as its theatre, the Playbox, the help of the bold young entrepreneur Wilson Morley, talk of close collaboration with Marshall, and the new opportunities for actors, especially if the creation of touring seasons, the venture looks at its birth sound and strong. The lesson of new developments of 1967 must be remembered a decade later, and the fighting so characteristic of the Melbourne scene (or rather behind it) must not be allowed to prevent further offspring in 1977.

With the simultaneous opening of *Servant* (APG) at Nureid and *Sergeant* (Parachute and Nureid) at the Playbox, a significant step forward has been taken in Sydney-Melbourne rivalry. Plans for more Nureid generated shows at the Playbox early next year (*Star's Christmas*, *Booker* and *Perfor* Strangely), and even stunts in the world of *Hoopla*/Nureid co-productions, show that this is not just one step, but a route march in an exciting new direction. Marches can't be made on empty stomachs. The APG has had nearly a decade and the MTC (including UTRC days) more than two, to establish themselves, surely enough for both not to be motivated by jealous paranoia over the emergence of a new company. *Hoopla* must be given the facility to move on confidently on a basis equal to that of Nureid. Hutchins must be heard and the realisation reached that diversity is the health and strength for the whole of Melbourne theatre.

QUOTES & QUERIES

TIMOR APOCALYPSE

RICK BILLINGHURST, artistic director, La Bolla Theatre: "It's going to be an apocalypse, because I think we're the only theatre that does Sam Wilson's plays, and the *Power Gals* will be a premiere. But *The Timor Show* is the major thing. We're trying to turn back the tide of English press and say that is so pervasive and if the main theatre companies won't do anything about it then the smaller alternative companies must. We'll be working on *The Timor Show* for four months until it goes on in November (Happy anniversary, Timor), and it will be a sort of cross between the Popular Theatre Troupe and Peter Chouman's *Snake-on-Toss*, work we're doing at as a game, but the more theatre's documentary can be loosely applied to it. Hopefully, others will be interested in it when we're done it."



"I see it as a second stage of the development of Queensland playwrights; they can now handle form but not content, other than kitchen sink and domestic. A lot like sitting at the centre of the cyclone — it all looks calm to them while storms are going on around. John Bradley, John O'Toole, Hugh Lunn, Loren Bel and Richard Forster/Harris will be working on it, along with real Timor refugees. They may be acting or directing too, the roles are mixing at the moment, though they may clarify later. As it's the first one, methods of working are taking longer than they should do. It will be chaotic-on-the-road, with each division as propaganda specifically directed to groups holding particular coloured programmes, representing social groups. People will go out of the theatre to make strategic plans and be fed appropriate food, like rice for the refugees. The Australians will stay in the theatre, get TV donors and be asked to choose their Christmas presents and a new government."

"We plan to do a show called *The St Patrick's Day Show* after that, about law and order, the kind that's banned out by Queensland politicians and police, and the peculiar reverence Queenslanders have for it. And then one as the demystification of

drugs and alcohol, why are drugs a political weapon when alcoholism is swept under the carpet?"

LONGER RUNS

RON BLAIR, assistant director, SATC: "In spite of the enthusiastic backing given to the South Australian Theatre Company by the Government and the support of Adelaide, the run for each production is still too short, three weeks after a month or more of rehearsal. One of the things I'd like to do in my year with the company is to build audiences to sustain a longer run for each play. This means each play will reach greater audiences while giving the actors a chance to hit their stride. At the moment they're hardly got into the play before it's closing night."

BUCKETT WORKSHOPS

JACQUELINE KOTT, Peter Simonson Foundation: "The Peter Simonson Foundation has been going for some years now, it was formed by a group of Peter's friends when he died. He was a director, and so our primary aim is to help directors, and as many directors as possible. There was a lot of discussion about the best way to do this. We thought of various scholarships, but in fact we have a tape of Peter saying that that can only help one person, who might not come back anyway, while bringing someone on can affect far more people. The original plan was to have a directors' workshop once every two years, but it's turned out to be more. William Bell in 1971, Stella Adler in 1973, Bill Gaskill in 1975, and Michael Baksmant in 1976."

"I think this year Alan Schneider has a very special contribution to make because he is a teacher — a lecturer — as well as a director. Michael Baksmant was very reluctant to teach. Alan is doing 10 short Buckett games — one certainly more — and he is a Buckett expert."

"The Tote has very kindly helped us to pay for the workshop by giving us a positive night of the Tote where the actors and everyone involved have donated their services, for which we will be taking. The Australia Council and the Wron Government have supported us immensely."

EQUITY FOR SPORTSMEN

DAVE SEMMERS, Queensland Equity organizer: "Three Brisbane-produced shows on Channel 9 have at various times been suspended because of that station's burgeoning cricket, tennis and football



coverage, and we've got real fears that if the Kerry Packer cricket shows just ahead, these and others could disappear altogether. Sportsmen are featuring on many TV ads, while 80 per cent of Equity members are unemployed and Equity oil-fund struggle to find the funds to stay open."

"If sport is going to dominate our TV screens in this way, the least we should be doing is signing up professional sportsmen as Equity members. Southern Equity has latched on to the idea, but in Queensland we think it's a matter of life or death for Equity. If they make money out of our industry, they should contribute to funding the association."

GROWING PAINS — STILL?

CAROL RAYE: "As an actor I'm already enormously involved in working work, and I can't work unless management put on shows. The thing that worries me about the response to *The Pleasure of Mr Company*, is not that the critics didn't like it, or people thought it was a bad play, but the unrealistic bias against shows imported by commercial management. I felt embarrassed as an Australian actor being asked by the management that was giving me work, 'What are we doing wrong?' Bernard Jay and Paul Elliott are two young men who adore theatre — and certainly not just for the money, they both started in the theatre and I've seen them myself, during the run, sweeping stages, and having dressing-room sessions."

"They were upset, too, at the apparently personal vendetta that seemed to be going on against imported actors. Douglas Fairbanks, Stanley Holloway and David Langton, who couldn't understand why everyone seemed to hate them. There were four local actors and four Australian

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underpays in the past, not to restore all the backstage jobs, and though I would love to think it was not, I think it's debatable whether we would have got the auditions without these actors. There is a hard core of theatre-goers who will always go to good theatre, but if you can get those who will only go to see 'nones' into a theatre at all, it can only be to the good. I'm terribly proud of our own actors, especially some of the younger ones, and I feel embarrassed to have to say to internationalists that this nationalistic fervour must be growing pains. Surely we're past that!

"Paul Elliott and he could have had the Theatre Royal for a year, no one here is putting on plays. It was he who sent President Gibson of the Royal to see *Tennessee* at Marine Street, and got him to take it on. Like other Australian actors, I was totally about *Dead-End* *Marin*, but Elliott was asked to bring in anything to keep the theatre open.

"Eagly should be stronger at such moments and also in areas like commercials. It's much worse for Dick Emery, Derek Nimmo and other people to have vast amounts doing commercials which don't give other actors work at all. The core plants are aimed at the wrong people.

"There's a possibility of *The Pleasure of His Company* coming back to tour at the end of the year, and in the meantime I'm doing a television called *Rock Show* *Power* by Tony Monaghan, directed by Pauladdy, and an episode of the four-part serial *Age of Tennessee*. I really want to do more theatre, it's so very satisfying."

OPEN DOOR IN THE WEST?

From a Perth correspondent

The National Theatre of Western Australia recently announced the appointment of the new Artistic Director who will take over from Aarne Neuma in the end of this year. Perhaps because Perth is so isolated the announcement has passed unnoticed by the rest of Australia.

The new director is to be Stephen Barry, an Englishman who, for the past three years, has been resident director of Harrogate Rep — before that a sort of TV news, before that work with various reps around England, and before that a considerable period of time with the National Theatre of Great Britain as one of their staff directors.

This is not bad experience, but compared with the experience of some of the Australian applicants one wonders whether the appointment, which is for a term of three years, is altogether justified.

It would appear that a member of the Board of Management of the National Theatre of WA went to England to interview one or two of the English applicants who were being considered for the post. There were three Australian directors who left on the short list. The English applicants were considered by the Board's representative to be shewable, so on the advice of the British Council — a body

which must not be confused with the Arts Council of Great Britain — Stephen Barry was interviewed. He had not previously applied for the position. However the Board's representative was apparently impressed by Mr Barry and on his recommendation Mr Barry was invited to fly to Australia for further interviews with other Board members.

By a marginal vote Mr Barry was appointed Artistic Director — the self-proclaimed champion of the indigenous artist is happy about the appointment and, because of a climate in the National Theatre's conservatism, was able to give Mr Barry his vote.

It would be interesting to know how many experienced Australian directors applied for the post and how many were interviewed by the Board of Management or a representative of that Board. Perhaps the salary advertised was not attractive to a resident of Australia. But if the Board is financially able to move an English applicant and his wife and family to this country (a cost of \$4,000 or \$5,000, including the start incurred by bringing him for the interview) they could have increased the advertised salary by \$1,000 per year and thus make it possible to attract a suitable Australian. Or are we to believe that such a person does not exist? Was the Australia Council — under the British Council — unable to recommend a specific person for the job? Or would they perhaps consider it unhelpful to do so?

Mr Barry's engagement is now confirmed, he has taken one of the few theatre-director's jobs in Australia that carries with it some degree of security. Will he be at all daunted by his considerable lack of knowledge of the Australian theatre scene and, more particularly, the available talent? It would seem that at the moment it is all too easy to step into the theatre world of Western Australia — let us hope there are no plans to bring further English artists through the door in our West Wing!



A PACKED WEEK

MARLIN THURMER, secretary ITI. "The 17th Congress of the ITI was held at Stockholm from 30 May to 3 June. On these occasions, the greatest pleasure is meeting international theatre people like the spectacular Ellen Stewart, founder of La Mama, from New York, and Peter Postma, from Denmark, who is to direct *The Flying Dutchman* for the Australian Opera later this year. Called 'a packed week' by the *Guardian's* Michael Hedges, the 380 participants from 48 countries in six continents met, talked and argued, ate and drank, and enjoyed performances together. Most memorably was a Monteverdi opera in the famous 16th century stage in the palace of Drottningholm, near Stockholm, and an open-air presentation of a Holberg comedy in the magnificent courtyard of the Vasa Museum on the Stockholm Archipelago.

"Conference discussions progressed in our committee and a request for a group of authentic Aboriginal dancers to participate in the 18th Festival at Tadmorral

years ago for the Papua New Guinea Drama Festival. I saw five plays by resident writers, and they were much better than those by the white writers. They have a very high standard."

WINTER READINGS

HELEN VAN DER POORTEN, chairman, Playreading Committee, ANPC. "On 27 June the North Parramatta community assembled 'Winter Readings' of new plays — mostly plays derived from the National Playwrights' Conference and supported also by Lumosity Press.

"Artistic director Victor Emeljanow used it as a way of exposing new scripts to a more general public than might see the plays at a conference. Additionally, by working the plays up to something of performance-status, there is a chance for management and agents to have some idea of the potential of a piece.

"With the first play, John Lee's *Australo-Chinese Opera: The Prosperous Enslavement of the Cultured Daughter*, directed by John Wrang, audiences were able for the first time to see the play with musical accompaniment and, second, and our modest wish they stayed behind after the show to discuss the play's effort to merge Eastern and Western lyrics.

"The format of each week's readings will remain much the same. For eight weeks, on Mondays and Tuesdays at 8.15 p.m., new plays will be read by actors such as Noel Fitzpatrick, Sandra Lee-Paterson, Max Cullen, Lu Chaoen, David Waters and Colin de Burgh. The multi-way discussions will follow each performance. Playwrights having new plays read are Rikita Hattman, Susan Yorke, John Aitken, Ron Blair, Mike Gyles, Ken McPhail, Geoff Splay, and Giacomo Tormo."



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Arts in March 1976, at Rennes, France, has already resulted from Australia's activity in the ITI's Third World Theatre Conference. Australian delegates have attended most of the ITI's biannual congresses. This year, Hal Lindwood (actor), Keith Bea (director), Adam Salzer (director), Roger Palmer (playwright) and myself were the lucky ones."

NATAL STAGES

JOHN TASKER: "At the end of July I'm off for three months to Port Moresby to be adviser in drama and administration to the Papua New Guinea National Dance and Theatre Company. It's a new company, an offshoot of the National School. I am simply going to be of whatever assistance I can when I get there — it's a very open brief and I'm most excited by it. They wanted me earlier but I was committed to *Don't Pull at the Wound, Maie*, and I have to be back by early November, as I'm directing *Gluck's Orfeo and Eurydice* for the Canberra Opera.

"It's a hectic six months, but I'm delighted to be able to assist in the natal stages of a new company. I will particularly be encouraging indigenous writers, of whom there is a great shortage in Papua New Guinea.

"I was in Port Moresby six or seven



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It is fair to say that history will judge a culture on the original work of producers, rather than on how well it reproduces other people's culture. Given that afternoon, we feel that the series of articles under the banner "Focus on S.A." completely missed an enormous area of theatre activity in the state which we think should have been included in a comprehensive and accurate study of South Australia.

There are some forty Community, Alternative and Semi-professional theatre companies within the Association of Community Theatres, it is these companies which are taking the responsibility for producing nearly all the original local and secondary (most grade) work in Adelaide. The Association itself is a liaison/publicity body servicing these companies, co-ordinating and disseminating information, pooling resources, presenting a regular series of workshopped readings of new local plays, and organising Community Theatre Days and Showcase Seasons to push our writing/acting/directing talents into the public eye. ACT 3, a six-week season of Community Theatre in The Space is at this moment displaying four new works in Drama and Music Theatre, and this will be followed in November by an original season of four new works at the University Little Theatre.

It was an ACT group — Circle — who first took a gamble on Steve Spear's *Young Man*, it was an ACT playwright's workshop that first discovered *Kari Kari*, and the first full production of a *Kari Kari* play, *Don's Puddle Against The Wind*, which was in the ACT 3 Season in July. Another ACT group, Troupe, presented local author David Allen's study of D.H. Lawrence, *If I Ever Get Back Home Again. I'll Give* — a brilliant play currently being looked at by Thames Television.

In a variety of ways that three of the plays presented at the recent Playwrights' Conference were by South Australian authors, but that has little to do with any of the institutions written up in your last edition. The task of developing a genuine, home-based culture has been left to ACT and its member groups. As this development should be of prime importance to responsible arts authorities, we were understandably disappointed to read, in Tony Baker's interview with the Premier, that:

"We have been endeavouring to help community theatre whatever we can. A great deal has been given in grants towards their operations. But they haven't always

resulted the standards we would like, either."

We hope we have drawn to your attention what we consider an omission on your part, and feel strongly enough about the matter to hope that you will correct it, either by publishing this letter, or by commissioning a follow-up article presenting the other side of the coin.

Incidentally, we are pleased to see the attention given to South Australia in your paper, and I personally look forward to such new editions, it is with what was NOT said rather than what was said that we make a exception.

Yours sincerely,
Frank Ford,
Chairman,
Association of
Community Theatres Inc.
Adelaide



Briefly, if I may, three points concerning your June issue:

1. The most depressing and infuriating bit of theatrical news of 1977 (or any year for that matter) must be that a State Drama Company has staged a production of *The Sound of Music*.

2. I can only imagine Wilson Marley was frustrated in saying 'Nancy Reagan was last seen in a play 15 years ago'. Nancy's many admirers would agree that her talents have been badly under-used, but she has, of course, over the past 15 years appeared in numerous musicals for government management and been guest artist with Melbourne Theatre Company, South Australian Theatre Company, Twelfth Night Theatre, St. Martin's Theatre and the National Theatre Company, Perth.

3. Ken Moffat, a member of our company, is also a member of the AYPAA and appearing at the International Children's Theatre Festival.

Tony O'Connell,
Director,
Riverina Training Company

Ray Stanley's

WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS



If some people think *A Chinese Line* is self-indulgent, what about Broadway's latest smash hit *Annie*? Based on the comic strip *Little Orphan Annie*, it has a little girl and a dog in the leads. Writing from New York, a friend, whose opinion I respect, refers to the musical as being "appalling, badly written and full of poisonous lies". Maybe that's one show which shouldn't be imported. . . . Several different management firms in Melbourne are interested in staging here the new musical. Broadway musical *I Love My Wife*. Understood failures have been put out to Ted Demme to appear in *The King and I* in Australia after he finishes the Broadway run and American tour of it.

Despite Paul Elliot taking care, after the Melbourne reviews for *Shirley Harcourt* and *John Thew* in *The Two of Us*, that English actors no longer would want to come here, it seems the heat is now on the other foot. Those who are in the queue to come, but so far haven't found talent, to check Jack Newbourn, Mattie Jacques and Eric Sykes. . . . Perhaps they'll be pinned up by Gary Van Egmond, currently in London confirming with Paul Dancy on future shows to follow the box office unless they're tied with *Doctor in Love*.

When the "Adelaide-Darwin circuit" was at Sydney's Theatre Royal, a survey was taken of audiences which resulted in revelation that 50 per cent of them had never before been made a live theatre. Guess there's a moral somewhere.

See *Lower Funder* has taken over from Alan Howard the principal role in the London production of *Wild Geese*. Recently received a letter from John Gaskinewich saying he and Clio Luing hope to be back at the beginning of next year. . . . Following the tradition set by *The Tenthers* and *All That Jazz* and *Act*, a one-man revue starring Jon Buckley, costed *Ladies Only*, had their "shop-window" performances at the St. Martin's in Melbourne (two at midnight), enthusiastically attended by members of the profession. John, who has stolen more shows than it's possible to recall, can now take his place beside Barry Humphries and Rag Lavelle. His female impersonations, achieved without falsetto voice or campy, are impressive and lifelike, and his writers — as programmed — included John Michael Howson, Mick Ridgier, Gary down, Fred Schepau, Ron Chalmers, Alan Sore, David Williamson and Rag Lavelle.

Understood Tennessee Williams is very eager to come to Australia and appear in one of his plays. Bit of a risk, though, seeing he cancelled his Adelaide Festival trip last year at the eleventh hour. . . . Ruth Cunn, who recently turned after 48 years' service with the Italia Costa Stage School in London, is to live in this country. Must be something of a record for a one-man show (possibly here) that Rag Lavelle has chalked up with *Wasteful Women*, playing for 10 months in Sydney. A three-month season is scheduled for Melbourne, three weeks in Canberra, and then Rag should be opening in London sometime around next March. We're back to that "First lady of the Australian stage" controversy. One reader writes me that "if it was Sydney alone, it would have to be *Andi Fair*". . . . Must have been perished, the report I received that Edna Egleby was doing radio commercials for *Funny Peculiar* (separate's a family show).

There's obviously something wrong somewhere. As the line stands now in Victoria, a live show can operate on a Sunday, and so can a licensed restaurant, but a set-up like The Last Laugh Theatre Restaurant which combines the two can't?

Ever since he played in *Relatively Speaking*, the first Alan Ayckbourn play to be seen in Australia, Peter Adams has been wishing to appear in another of the English playwright's vehicles. Now he's getting his wish on what seems to be a major-made role in the Old Tote's *The Norman Conquests*. Melbourne's Pallas Theatre has its 50th anniversary on November 11. Understood something special's being cooked up to celebrate it. Apparently, on the same day it opened the then Prince of Wales landed in Melbourne.

In England a firm making a herbal cigarette under the brand-name *Blowytown* is attempting to introduce its product via non-smoking actors who are called upon to smoke on stage.

For a long time now, everyone has assumed the Melbourne Theatre Company will be occupying the Playhouse of the Victorian Arts Centre when it finally opens, mainly because it's the only major company around. Hypothetically perhaps, but, if by 1981, or whenever it is the theatre outgrows opera, there's another group with higher standards and aspirations, it's possible. . . . Our 250 performances is not to be scoffed at, but, in view of its explicit sex content and constant full frontal nudity, one would have expected *My People Come* to have attracted more audiences in Melbourne. Wonder who the person is who took such a leap to the May edition of *Thriller Australia* to be shipped 10 copies of it one Friday evening from Melbourne's Shakespeare Bookshop.

Am hearing persistent rumour that the director of one of our national companies intends to retire next year. Personally, I can't believe it. — And it's not Bill Rodmond! Derek Nunn is making his third trip in *Why Not Stay for Breakfast* to that part of the world. This time it's New Zealand, where he spent August 11.

New York has its own *The Club* and, although the characters are all male and it's a smash hit, there the comedienne ends to David Williamson's play. Set in a men's club at the turn of the century, with awful unknown supposedly authentic songs of the period, and schoolboy type "Mad" dialogue, it's performed by seven women in male attire. I read the script and thought it terrible, so did most of the reviewers, but three rivers at the acting have turned it into a success. Whether Australia sees a production or not, it could spark a counter-trend to all the female impersonation shows we seem to see.

The recent death of that highly skilled high-comedy actress Sophie Stewart highlights the way the Australian theatre — and in particular the commercial — ignores the talent within its midst. Married in Australia since Ellen Irving, Sophie, with whom I corresponded over the years, lived on and off in Sydney for several periods in the past and presently. A West End leading lady of some substance, the only roles she played here during that time were a day one in *White Men Murder* for a commercial engagement, Mrs Higgins in JMW's revival of *My Fair Lady*, Madame Kovensky, *Glorious in Stankel* and *Lady Beaumont* for the Old Tote, and in *The Five Men Power* at the St Martin's. With just a little management from management here, Sophie would never have returned to the U.K. and settled back on her native Scotland.

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Garrie Hutchinson

Ten years of Carlton theatre



'The events . . . at La Mama and the Pram Factory have changed the face of Australian theatre forever'



Rehearsal at the Pram

August 1955 saw the first production of Melbourne's Latent Theatre Repertory Company, and the year since, with the consequent reputation of the Summer Festival, have shown that theatre of that kind can survive and even prosper. That any kind of theatre staggered through the fifties and early sixties is it started not to be recorded at. That the company produced 16 Australian plays between 1955 and 1967 is a fact worthy of some applause. But, by the time the UTRC changed its name to the Melbourne Theatre Company in 1966, it was clear that times had changed. No longer was everyone relieved that a company, any company, was surviving. Some wanted more *Mime* Australian plays, more relevance to the Australian experience, more understanding of what it means to live here and now, more comprehension of the history of the theatre since Thespis, more excitement, more of everything.

These people, while not entirely given over to the sex-dope-rock-and-revolution syndrome of the sixties (some were, and are, positively authentic), and of another generation. The Australians here (roughly) in the fifties just naturally assumed that if you wanted to do something, you went out and did it. Orbits might go in the way, but sooner or later they'd see reason. Write novels, plays,

poems, film. Stop the war. Get rid of the government. Take over universities. If no one would publish or produce your work, do it yourself.

This attitude, looking back on it now, was astonishingly naive. It was founded on a profound ignorance of the way the political, social and cultural processes worked. It declined comprehension of economics and the problems of those struggling souls who appeared material concerns. These were the things raising anything at all. But given a whole generation's exuberant self-confidence, somehow or other things did change. The question of which was the cultural chicken, and which the social egg is a question best left to students of the arcane sciences. But what is true is that the posture of the theatre now, while not perfect, is a few laps ahead of where it was in August 1967. Or August 1955.

August 1967 saw the first production at La Mama. It was, unsurprisingly, Jack Hubbard's *Three Old Friends*. The cast was George Blundell, Bruce Knappett and David Kendall. The decade since then, in and around La Mama, might not constitute the history of the Australian Theatre in that time, but it does amount to a good part of it.

La Mama the building is behind an open space used as a car park in Forsyth Street,

Carlton, and behind a busy shopping street, Lygon Street. It is in the heart of cryptic-bohemian Carlton, traditional home of students, migrants and artists. When Betty Burdett found it and began rounding up people like Hubbard, Blundell, Bruce Davies and many others to turn it into something resembling Ellen Stewart's New York La Mama, it was a former distillery. They must have been pretty small sheds, as the factory generally seats only about 50. Tightly.

What was soon discovered was that La Mama was a very congenial spot for the outstanding company, who in small but influential numbers began to come. Hubbard, Ken Hensley, Betty Oakley, Frank Brown, Michael Thomas and Syd Clayton all had plays performed in 1967 by Knappett, Blundell, Kendall, Lyndell Rowe, Kerry Dryer, Bill Glazer, Peter Carrothy, Peggy Cook, Malcolm Robertson, Bart Cooper, Sandra McCaughey, Michael Wandborough, Peter Green, John Ramond, Mike Harris, Janet Laune and others. La Mama soon became a focus a place in someone's legendary words where things could happen, where there was room to let World get around, and through 1968-9 there were about 50 new plays or performance pieces done. They were of varying quality, but were extremely exciting.

Kerry Dwyer at La Mama 69



Bruce Spence at the Pram

Three years also saw the formation of a more or less regular group, the La Mama Company, which, with Tribe, provided the backbone of the work done at La Mama.

The La Mama Company grew from the actors, writer and directors of a season of Hubbard's metatexts called *Rehearsal*, performed at Melbourne University in 1965. Actors' Workshops occurred gleaned from the latest seasonal TDR's, where ensemble acting, physical acting, encounter groups and anything else were tossed about. This enthusiasm was given something of a job title in 1968 when the arrival of Lindsay Smith, Ross Hamilton, and John Rosman led to the political capital of Australia, Monash University. The working-out of the relationships between politics and performance, taking and giving, aggression and spontaneity, laboratory theatre and middle-class audience has informed much of the work of The La Mama Company and what it became, The Australian Performing Group.

The style of the group was described in 1968 as "super-naturalism" and was conducted by the two places where most of it took place. The first was the tiny La Mama space where the intent of an actor could be credit and where any fantasy or verse or physical action was (and is) immediately apparent. There had to be

genuine truths if you like, at each moment. Unconvening language on the part of the writer or half-consciousness from an actor was embarrassing for the audience. This led to a certain rigidity in performance, to a simplification of gesture and a complication of subject. The more that took place in the space, the more suppressing the performance.

The other situation where performances took place was the open air. The arrival of the potteries led to a large amount of work on street theatre, and on a sort of paganist theatre for demonstrations, rock festivals and the like. Typical of these plays were Rosman's *Mr Big the Big Big Big*, *The Communion Story of Mr Big*, and *Dr Karl's Race*. Here moral tales were told in simple cartoon forms using masks, pant puppets, music, and "the closure of large gestures". Perhaps the most eloquent of these sorts of events was *Whatever Happened To Aristotle?* an one-act-one-act performance that took place in the La Mama carpark, where six actors were attacked by the local wallabies.

Plays performed inside La Mama during 1968 included Hubbard's *Gumbaba*, *Who and Rosman's I Don't Know Who To Tell Story For* as well as pieces by Sam Shepard and Megan Terry. The La Mama Company also produced *Burnt News* and *Almond and Barry Oakley's The English*

Arrives.

At the same time as in this activity with taking place, another kind of theatre, a more cerebral, cerebral, inward-looking style, was being developed by Tribe. While that was often very physical, it's subtext-matter was more in the realm of painted opportunity than on the factory floor as involved in understanding Australian culture. Whatever the long-term influence of Tribe, the events themselves were generally marbling, and people like Doug Anderson, Alan Robertson and Carol Porter, have continued working.

A similar though more art and musical style of performance, was developed by Syd Clayton, who created a species of performance art that even now surfaces from time to time. And through the time playwrights like Ross Hamilton and Barry McKernan added other works to retrospectively more famous events.

The aggressive marketing policy of the APG from 1970 has somewhat overshadowed the work of other people at La Mama, especially after the group left during that year to work on the first production at the Pram Factory, *Morethan Melbourne*. A certain amount of amnesty recognized the anti-topical nature of plays by the APG — Hubbard's *What Bush Knew* *Where*,



Graham Blundell as the man from Chicago

Rossett's *Men From Chicago*, Bazza's *Front Room Beer* — was an important event. It marked the arrival of the new wave acts and for all, and set up the APG for an extraordinary (and timely) success at the From Factory over the next five years.

The other major productions, though, in 1970 were pretty interesting in themselves. Ken Himmelman's *Herzogsmann Barth Hux* is an interesting unscripted work and there were four plays by David Williamson including *Stark*, as well. Williamson did pretty well with *The Anniversary* the next year, as did Syd Clayton with *House Down Goods*, Himmelman with *First Quarter Report*, and Tobe with *The Gooseberry Bush* by Frank Sully and *A Last Look At Southern* by Alan Robinson.

Since then, though, there has been a demarcation of energy, and although there have been some terrific productions done, nothing has happened to replace the excitement and energy of the earlier years. In even shows in the last three playwrights as good as Max Ruzhards, (who's very good) has had some 50 plays done at La Mama without causing much of a ripple outside Carlton. The decline of La Mama as a place where history is created has meant a return to its original function: a venue where more or less anyone can do more or

less anything they want to without being checked too closely. And more often than not the actual events are worth a visit.

The APG, on the other hand (from *Marvellous Melbourne* onward), has become a more and more important group to the extent that a period of loss of focus, as in the past year or so, has meant the same for Melbourne's theatre in general.

The APG has been on the unfortunate position where every aspect of theatre theory and practice that is not undertaken by the MTC or commercial management (which leaves 95 per cent) has become its responsibility. Coupled with a dedication to collectivisation of decision-making, and even of the theatre process, the pressures inside and outside the group have been intense. One only has to list the sorts of activities attempted to see the scope of the APG's endeavours. What appears to be a random series of attempts at everything, is really a consistent approach to a single question: what kind of theatre should we develop?

There has always been a strong commitment to Australian writing, of course, mainly in the work of Himmelman, Rossett and Oakley. The APG has done more to establish the list of the red-garbed producers than any other single source in Melbourne, over plays like Himmelman's *A Strike of the Anzacpatriot*, Peggy Sue, *A Front to*

Myths, and *The Overcoat*, Rossett's *The Floating World* and *Chicago*, Oakley's *The First of Daniel Mannix*, *Brother of Lemmings*, *Redcliffe* and the first production of Williamson's *Dance Party* have firmly settled the question of Australian writing. It's here to stay.

Then there are the group-created shows like *Marvellous Melbourne*, *The Mole Family Show* and the extraordinary women's show *Better Can Jump* — all remarkable achievements.

Children's theatre, circus, educational theatre, performance, even some foreign contemporary plays, experimentalism, poppory, street theatre, passenger shows, propaganda and more have been attempted. Plus at least three versions of an acting style, all so moving at the moment. Whichever way you look at it, and wherever your opinion of individual shows and events as random, the whole thing is of considerable importance. The APG's collection was, and still could be, the source of its strength.

The events of the past 10 years at La Mama and the From Factory have changed the face of the theatre in Australia forever. With the same sort of activities at Jane Street and Nimrod over the same period, 1963-77 has been a most fruitful decade. Happy anniversary!

"I think that Max Gillies is one of the very funny Australian actors. He's really terribly good. Absolutely first-rate. I think the Frog Factory phase is over for him." — Barry Humphries, *Farrago*, 13 September 1974

John Larkin

THE MANY MASKS OF MAX GILLIES

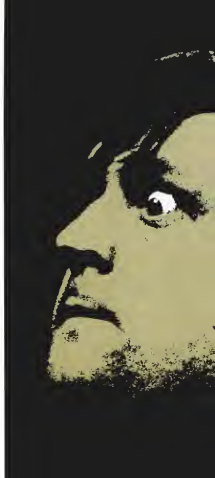
You'll find Max Gillies, somewhere and somewhere near as funny as he is on stage. In fact, he can be really a serious sort of bloke. Doesn't say much. And sensitive.

Whatever you do, they said, talk with him alone. Don't try to interview him in The Office, the back bar of Sirocco's Hotel in Carlton, with all these other people from The Firm there. Otherwise you'll end up having to talk to them all at once.

The impression was the search for the man, Max Gillies, behind his multitude of masks as an actor could require peeling away some personal disgust as well.

For this most public of Carlton players, reputed to be one of the funniest people in Australian live theatre today — he has just won the Best Actor Award for Victoria — also laid a reputation for being a private person.

It was looked by his somewhat dry sub-median, friendly though, that he was a bit





diffident towards the idea of being interviewed, because 'I'm not very good at that sort of thing.'

Finding the person himself was done by following his directions, given over the telephone.

There is a big house at the foot of the street I live behind it, on the back - is it like that?

The implication of this throwaway line, delivered dead pan, was that The Poets were indeed, as believed, pretty poor, or that he was, according to Stanislavsky, preparing himself for his Australian tour as Mark O'Neill in *A Sinner of the Imagination* by living in the same style dwelling as he occupied in the play.

What sacrifice for the sake of art? What dedication to be true to life to have incarnated himself thus in the foreboding backblocks of North Melbourne?

A young lady, also from *The Poets*, answered the door in a leeward, at the middle of her yawn. You'd find Max, she said - yes, I know, down the back.

This meant going through the long hallways of this most splendid Victorian terrace, through a gentle garden of gees and bluestone blocks, down an almost secret path to . . . a tin shack. There it was.

But what a shack! Instead of being the anticipated overgrown barnhouse one, it emerged through the trees as one of the finest examples of dramatic space-age architecture seen around the city in a long time - a soaring, many-level screen of planes and angles, a sculpture of glass and wood and . . . tin. Yes, the architect had used great sheets of gleaming galvanized iron around the exterior, inside, of course, and cranking off sorts of shapes as it curved up over the tower towards the sun. Some shack?

Who had said that Max, the mate, was not funny?

While he made fresh coffee, Gillies explained that he was a longtime member of an informal union, a group of people who shared all their money and supported each other when necessary, especially if somebody wanted to do something non-utilitarian such as acting, and this house had been built by the group. So, it was his house, but it was!

His presence, though, permeated through the long rows of books on everything from art to screen books to novels to weights to stores of the great comedians to *The Poets' Conspiracy Unmasked*.

We drank a lot of coffee and smoked a lot of cigarettes as we talked about his life and work while sitting around the pot-bellied stove. He would change chairs a couple of times, moving around the room, during the long discussion.

This suggested a sign that he might not care to be pinned down personally too much. He was not, far from it, too ready with details of his own history, not unless it seemed relevant to the story of his work, and that of *The Poets*, for the two were always together.

Any discussion with Gillies soon reveals this attachment to the Australian Performing Group, which is really A. Family, of which he is not only a go-to-her and chairman but also, at 35, a proud participant.

Gillies used to be a primary school teacher. Then he went to a teachers' college for six years, where he studied its drama classes, working right from the mid-series through to the early twenties.

Before that, he had done a lot of student drama, and before that, a lot of amateur plays. He had worked in productions at Melbourne University and learned various techniques from which each director affiliated each play "I think that's the best way to learn, related to each particular play."

After teachers' college he went to Monash University, where he directed and acted in a couple of plays.

Choosing acting as a career, though, took its time. When he left school in 1938 he thought about trying to make it professionally. But he also wondered what sort of work he would have to do to make a living out of it.

Apart from the Melbourne Theatre Company, there was little regular television at the time, and he was not interested as an actor. Ideologically, he knew he could never fit into the MTC.

"I didn't want to be an actor at all costs. Teaching seemed much more worth while. I didn't see a theatre career as being important when based on (1) chance and (2) making it on the professional sense of being competitive. I wanted satisfaction from what I was doing and that came from teaching and amateur productions."

Amateur theatre gave him a huge work of modern drama in which to work. He was very excited by John Arden, Brecht and Beckett. He once played Stanley in *The God*.

As for style, well "There was nothing repulsive about it. You did what came naturally, and picked up technique along the way."

In those early days, Gillies did once try to get into NIDA, but found he could not handle the audition "It hasn't done one thing. One rejection I'd feel was subconscious. I felt confident about what I could do as a performer, but not sure of what I could do as an actor."

For his audition, he did a piece from *The Republic of Ghoree*. He remembered it well. It was on the stage at the Princess. He used to feel fantastic about it, knowing that what work would come after being at NIDA would not excite him.

"Also, the formal way into the business doesn't have any connection with what makes you a performer who can operate unselfishly in front of the audience. In fact, I still don't know what motivates people to want to be an actor (more than people are in real life). To want to do nothing else and make a profession out of it. . . I find that a bit difficult to comprehend."

"I'm a bit suspicious of the fact that I need to perform."

He said a lot of his attitudes to formal theatre changed in the late twenties with the setting up of the college drama course and working with students. The best work they did was unapproved people not being miserable or uneasy with Shakespeare or modern American. "The ideal out of those workshops were often more stimulating. The therapeutic nature of the activity was quite exciting."

His gradual drift into the APG began when it was still at La Marna, where "People I'd been to university with, Hibbard, Blundell, Brian Davies, were galvanising quite a bit with Barry Burdall." Gillies started with them part time in mid-1970.

Then the Prism Factory became available. They moved in, renovated it, set up a six-month workshop and in March 1971 staged *Marcellus Melbourne*, by Hibbard and Remond, with Gillies and Blundell both as directors and players.

Melbourne thought it was marvellous, and they were away.

Gillies then gave a long and detailed account of the programme of The Prism over those seven years. It was typical of him that his own successes should be not singled out as separate from the APG, that his account should cover the collective.

Next, they did *Chicago, Chicago*, by John Remond, in a much revised version of the original 1969 presentation. Max Gillies was the producer.

Katherine Brooker, writing in the *Australian*, said it was one of the APG's best yet. "There is an underground current of dramatic talent about, which will not for much longer permit itself to go unrecognised."

In November 1971, Gillies directed *Henry Gaultier's The Feet of Daniel Marne*. He also acted in it.

Margaret Jones, writing in praise in the *Sydney Morning Herald* said "The mild, underlining progression of the play is greatly helped by two remarkable performances by Bruce Spence, the tallest actor in the business, as Dr Marne, and by Max Gillies, who plays Mr Greenstein, architect of The Movement, with every exact gesture and verbal nuance of Mr R.A. Sattamaria." She said the audience "fell about in its seats in joyful hysterics every time Max Gillies came on." Most times, they will die.

Talking about the early APG successes, as they moved into 1971, Gillies said "They made us think more clearly about the question of where do we go from here. How were we to respond more responsibly to the public?"

We consolidated the APG and we defined membership as anybody who'd been helping to make the theatre operative and we provided for monthly group meetings with the executive to be elected every three years."

He was elected the first APG chairperson, and held the office for three terms.

In October 1972, The Prism staged John Remond's political career, *Mr Cow Swinger's Sister Brown*, produced by Catherine Blundell.

Leonard Glickfield, writing in the *Sunday Telegraph*, said "This play, with its hellishly racist and murderous, technique double-winged aeroplane, shadow puppets, beavering boats, natural slams and Max Gillies having a wonderful time hitting and declaiming as Adelaide's corrupt governor, George Wallace, offers some of the most exciting stage images we have seen in Melbourne."

Glickfield continued his praise of Gillies when writing about his performance as Sir Wilfred MacLachlan the retired Australian Prime Minister, in Barry Burdall's *Disorder of Intestines* in the *Sunday Telegraph* in January 1973, he said:

"It is not like the old days. Few Australian performers command a following on the strength of their real talents rather than the (art of their PR or television images."

"An exception is to be found in the Prism Factory. When the poets and publicity bluffs someone that Max Gillies is in the new show, the photos generally mislead."

"Gillies is possibly the best character actor at work in Australia theatre today — and definitely the best character actor under the age of 30."

"Here, squat, with a rubber moon-face that suggests a Stan Laurel in his most clownish moments, Gillies is blessed with the physical attributes of an Alec Guinness. He has a quiet dignity, wonderful hand-someness, average height, which enables him to look tall or small on stage, tremendous agility and powers of observation. Most crucial of all for an actor he has the ability to efface himself completely as stage."

"Under the influence of the APG's working and obscure metric style, Gillies' impersonations do not hide already also define a reprobation: a Victorian was serious and Billy Mitchell becomes grotesque three times, but under the influence of his own meticulous looking for observations, they become personalised, universal statements about the Australian character."

"Gillies' accomplished character. He transforms innocent politicians into awkward buffoons, and then reinvents them to mirror attitudes typical of the ordinary man in the street."

And as a last gone on, Ian Robinson, writing in the *Sunday Press* in September 1973, about Harold Pinter's *The Dutch House* at the Prism, said "It is hard to estimate how much of its success is due to a consistent strong performance by Max Gillies as Gus. His control and attention to detail are constantly astounding."

And as in *The Archivist* and the *Empire of Anarchy* (February 1974) which showed Gillies' flair, too, for dramatic versatility, as Groucho in *On the Marx*, a month later, in Barry Gaultier's *Bodyflower* (January 1975), described as a marvellous comedy, but which left some critics feeling it was half serious, too, and said, as the publisher Ivan Negus in *Chickens' Smoking in Bed for You* (December 1975), as a masterpiece of parts in



A Tour to India (March 1976), in *The Irish Family Show* (1978-7), and more again as Monk O'Neill in *A Sprink of the Assassination*, for which he was acclaimed by this critic in 1976 as giving the performance of the year.

Some people have thought perhaps Gillies was being looked at too tight with The Frim people, that maybe the tighter one was cramping his style, that he could just about work anywhere.

When asked, he said, yes, there had been offers of outside work and they had talked about it amongst themselves at the APG. But he felt there would not be the range of choice elsewhere as he had at The Frim. "It's nice to be offered a part, but what's the point of something not being local immediately?"

"At the Frim Factory we can create images and televisions. That's a role theatre can have that's very important, just giving people a feeling of possibilities for themselves... of recognising themselves instead of being given images of the English class-system and American enterprise."

"You're performing experiences common to the community. That's positive for a start, getting images of our lives on stage. You recognise theatre as a neutral territory for acting out possibilities."

"First of all you reflect society, and then you change it, on stage. You act through various of people's lives in a non-threatening way. You can show what could

be done, in that way or this way."

There was some concern at times, he said, of The Frim becoming a ghetto. "We worry about the general thing of being isolated. But when it comes to the church and you have to make a particular decision — the way you see yourself in terms of work activity — you control yourself to the ongoing activity of the APG as a cultural expression — and that's the first priority. So, if you're working, there that usually takes precedence over any outside offers."

At the same time, he said, they did not think they should stay isolated. "I ought to work outside the place a bit more. But it's a matter of time and programs. You need to come into contact with other ideas."

"If I did more work outside The Frim, I'd like it to be films because they go out to more people."

Gillies has already had a lot of involvement in films, including *A Salute to the Great McCarthy*, *Babylon*, *Pure Star and Applause*, *Phone*, quite a lot of fringe films.

Asked about his acting style, he said he had studied the theories of Western theatre styles. "But a lot of that doesn't have a lot of immediacy. It becomes less significant."

"In terms of preference for style, I suppose for me it's some sort of comic." One comic referred to him as a fine comedy actor with a tendency to clown. "That was fairly devastating. I don't know what I thought about that, but at least I

remembered it!"

He said he had studied such people as Danny Kaye, Jerry Lewis, Woody Allen, George Wallace, the Marx Brothers and W.C. Fields. He preferred the style of broad comedy, farce.

"One of the things about the Frim Factory has always been we have always seen ourselves as a reaction against formal theatre."

"But the point about art is you want to get the thing right. You don't approach it from wanting it to be an artistic comedy as you can, but you work on the art of comedy." He spoke of "a stylised preference for comedy over naturalism or tragedy because there's an element of obliquity in it."

"You're not pretending you're suffering on stage. You're saying 'Laugh at this behaviour, or have mixed feelings towards it.' You might say 'Why am I laughing at this? It's quite shocking.' Somehow, your mind's engaged with it."

He said he enjoyed the intimacy of relationships as working at The Frim.

Asked if he ever felt trapped by it, he said "You're there not because they won't let you out but because you've something in common with the others. But there's so much of individual experience there that it's a bit of a luxury."

He said there were plenty of chances to be self-critical, although it was more sensitive. Confidence came from the collective criticism. "You're not the best actor who's got to face the brutal alone. We come to grips with the fact that some people wear criticism less than others. You evolve a working critique of what you're doing in a natural sort of way. There's more development in our productions than at the actual rehearsals and the cast self-critiques more. When it works, it's as much a part of that ensemble process as any person's flirt, or somebody's 'arousing vision'."

He said the committee development style at the APG was a delicate balance between individual creative impulse and a collective assessment. Sure, there were problems about setting some individual instances, but any one must not be allowed to dominate so the rest become puppets.

The Irish Family Show, he said, was a success story of the APG. "We are saying on stage all the time: 'We are the consciousness and you are the audience. But we want you to join in a game about theatre. That doesn't happen very much these days. The Irish Family Show is not a piece of theatre that you watch. It's as much a game with the audience about acting and theatre. It's a game you can join in."

"Sure, we were manipulating, but that happens all the time. Be prepared suffering a manipulation of the highest order. What we do has brought it more out into the open."

And what they having a good time?

"Oh, yes," he said.

Oh course they are.

John Lykes is theatre writer for the *Sunday Press Melbourne*.

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To coincide with the
Sydney Production of *Big Toys*
Dorothy Hewett discusses the
plays of Patrick White

The White Phenomena

It is a delight for anyone who supports the great imaginary voice of Patrick White to be discussing his first four plays at a time when *Big Toys*, the first new White play for thirteen years, is rehearsing at the Sydney Opera House with Ross Fitzpatrick, Arthur Dignam and Max Cullen. Jim Sharman is directing.

Last year Sharman directed a revival of *The Seasons at Saragorilla* for the Tote, the first time a White play had reached an Australian audience since *Night on Bald Mountain* in 1944.

The production was stylish and generally well received, with brilliant performances from Robyn Munn, Kate Fitzpatrick, Bill Hunter, Max Cullen and Peter Whitford. Unfortunately many critics seemed unable to take into account that the play was precisely a piece of theatre history. Nor was it an accident that even in 1976 the Patrick White play chosen was the most successful of all his plays.

White's longevity in the theatre seems to have been his timing. In his first play, *The Ham Funeral*, written in 1947 and not performed for fifteen years, all too unnecessary for the Australian theatre to tackle! Was it the whole truth that White, wounded by the savage and destructive reception of his plays, could not then exist in the hurly-burly of the theatre, and after a short period of enormous playwrighting frenzy, withdrew all his plays from production?

The more sympathetic and informed audience reaction to *The Seasons at Saragorilla*, a dedicated director and the support of the Tate, were obviously key factors in White's return to the theatre with *Big Toys*. The overall result may be that all the plays will return to our theatrical repertoire, and we will at last be convinced that, as the long absence of Patrick White as a playwright, Australia lost an imaginary genius at a time when our theatre badly needed his mature, moral vision, and multiplicity of styles, to counteract the drabbehold of naturalism.

White's first writing was for the theatre. At twenty he wrote a drawing-room comedy and a one-act, performed at a Sydney little theatre, the Playhouse. Both plays were later suppressed by him as juvenilia. In 1935, after his graduation

from Christchurch, and his decision to become a writer, he produced verse sketches and lyrics for sophisticated, intimate London audiences, at the Little Glee theatre, long before he published his first novel, *Happy Valley*, in 1939.

The influence of his verse writing days, and his delight in theatrical forms, are reflected in his love for interludes and scenes played before drops (e.g. the London street scene interlude in *The Ham Funeral* with the two old ladies in party hats, lace and feathers peering over the railings, finding fish bones and a tomato and swallowing false pearls), the chorus of four relatives in bowler hats, identical soap-soured men with drooping straw mustaches popping their heads intermittently out of the house windows, as if stirred from English pain, the chorus of old ladies in the Saragorilla Southern Home, the bizarre funeral of Mrs Liffen in *A Cherry Bowl*.

The sense of the maturing London ladies had given the critics a list of imaginary troubles: 'What is a thing there? Is it necessary? Does it assist the action?' they ask, perceiving White, with customary misgivings, wrote a note to the programme of *The Ham Funeral*: "A lapse of taste and a change of scene were necessary, so I gave way to my weakness for music hall. In any case many actual interludes are a feature of the farces and the broad."

Little Ross in *The Making of Australian Drama* believes that this scene, which makes about any other factor, made swimmers for the play. But the questions asked wisely point to the bewilderment of Australian audiences and critics facing *The Ham Funeral* eighteen years after it was written. They ask all the wrong questions. After *The Legend of King O'Malley*, and the APF Melbourne experiments, such questions were no longer relevant and White takes his place as the first modern Australian playwright to take advantage of all these theatrical devices that became stock-in-trade for the young Australian playwrights after 1947/48.

The Ham Funeral was written in 1947 in the same period as White first found his own original novelist's voice in *The Aunt's Story*.

The play came before Foster, however, and Beckett's *Godot*. There was a period after the war when expressionism in England was already considered dated. Russia was vaguely unknown. *The Ham Funeral* came out of various theatrical and personal experience. It was originally directed by the Dutch painter of *The Great Landlord* and White's own experience of London led him to a young man (the grumpy Young Man of the play script).

It's theatrical roots lie in European expressionism and symbolism in theatre, perhaps influenced also by Fry and Eliot's verse dramas, White's own verse writing and his passion for music hall (shared incidentally by T.S. Eliot).

If we look at what was happening in Australia (before in 1947 we can see what light years White was away from his native country) Samuel Locke Eliot's *Rusty Bugles*, a documentary with the accent on character and folklore, was shocking Australian audiences at the Independent for its "sensuous", got itself banned, and then broke all box office records on an Australian tour. Dymphna Cusack and Gerald Grey were writing social comment plays. By the end of 1952 Gwen McFadden had written twenty-two episodes of *Shir Hild* amongst a host of radio soap operas, and Ruth Park and Leslie Ross had turned her naturalistic novel of Henry Hild into life, *Keep in the South*, into a play.

"The real world", said *The Sun*, "Starkly real", and the Telegraph Douglas Stewart's verse dramas, chasing legendary and historical Australia before, had been listened to on radio, and seen, with some misgivings, on the stage.

Rusty Rivers, the ethnic "rough" natural world arrived, via Don Dunstan, the Bush Music Club, and New Theatre in 1952, *The Bull* in '53, *The Shining Heart* in '57, and *The Ham Funeral* would play in Adelaide in 1961. The period is dealt with in a chapter called by Ross, in *The Making of Australian Drama*, "Realism and Naturalism in the late 1950s".

The only play that could come within range of *The Ham Funeral* in style and imaginative scope was Peter Kraus's *Slaughter of St. Teresa's Day* in 1959, and the critics and its boxoffice raised the

The criticism of structural weaknesses is to be levelled at White also, but only as he reflected the conservatism of the times, under-matched on drama of emotions and the well-made play.

England was in the middle of its luncheon period with Osborne and Webster when Patrick White offered *The Room Fanned* to the Adelaide Festival. He had returned to Australia as a prodigal son, already famous for *The Tree of Man*, *Four old Sisters in the Church*.

A year before Alan Seymour's *One Day of the Year* had been rejected by the Federal Theatre through the fierce lobbying of the RSC. White's fate was no better. If Seymour's minimalist play was considered a national scandal because of its theme, *The Room Fanned* left a powerful minority lobby on the Federal Board bewildered and bewildered. Comments ranged from "The author, although he may have won the odd prize here and there, is unknown", "is catering play for highbrows", "too confronting for the public taste", "too bare of potential", "misapprehending fate", as well as Miss Harris' comment: "The *Room Fanned* revolves between poetic fantasy and a sharply etched realism".

The pre-*Room Fanned* lobby called it "a modern work of power and imagination, satisfying at a deep level some real and basic audience emotional needs", but the majority spoke with the day, and *The Room Fanned* was rejected.

The Adelaide University Theatre Guild staged it first in 1961 with John Tasker directing, and it played at the Palace Theatre to standing room only for a two and a half week season. The last night had a standing ovation. Later a provincial repertory company staged it in London, but it has never been seen since.

In 1962 White's second play, *A Season at Sarsaparilla*, played at Adelaide University Theatre Guild with John Tasker again directing. Obviously more acceptable then, as now, because of its more naturalistic style it moved to Melbourne Union Theatre and then the Sydney Theatre Royal. *A Cherry Soul* (1963), for me perhaps White's most fascinating play, did not move beyond a short season at Melbourne's Lyman Theatre, and *Night on Wolf Mountain*, powerful, imaginative theatre, was a fringe performance only at the Adelaide Festival in March 1964.

The plays were the subsequence of a period of amazing theatrical fertility, between November 1961 and March 1964, three out of the four plays being written in little more than a year, almost as if White was engaged by his rejection and that tension between adulation and hatred which Australian seem to reserve for their exceptional artists.

Lacking his sounds from *The Room Fanned* White vowed he would write no more plays. He wrote three, and then, "speech after long silence", *Big Toys*.

It is inevitable that his high reputation as a novelist has blurred critical response to the plays. They are usually discussed as addenda to the more weighty business of



(Doris Howes)

the novels, or as purely literary works existing on the printed page. They are not literary works, but playable, exciting works for the theatre.

White broke new Australian ground in the delineation of the country of the mind in his novels. The themes, characters, types, locations, often overlap in the plays and novels. The White style, tone of voice, vision of life, is unmistakable in both genres, and there are borrowings back and forth. Sarsaparilla, Australia's nightmare suburbia he made his own, is the locale of plays, novels, short stories from *The Tree of Man* onwards.

The Cherry Soul with its grotesque and terrible female goddess, Miss Decker, translates from short play to play. *The Room Fanned* is the first White work in any genre to emphasise the accuracy for simplicity, beauty and loving kindness to distinct from desire, a basic moral philosophy is all his work from that time on.

White's plays demand imagination, intellect, skill, and brilliant outrageous leaps from their distances. No wonder few have dared the challenge.

It has been the fashion to use *The Room Fanned* as the most playable of the plays. What is not often mentioned is that each play has its strengths, problems and innovations. No play of the four discussed sounds still on the ground of the last play, always the mark of a brilliant artist. While clare reach on the theatre, sometimes inevitably to talk about, seven, I believe, does he actually feel.

Facing his plays was a sympathetic critic: like Robert Brinsford writing in *Menage* 3, 1964, maintained that "no single play, with the possible exception of *The Room Fanned*, can be judged a complete success, but his body of work is more substantial and promising than any other Australian dramatist".

Brinsford saw the plays as "structurally weak" being through "the quality of the language and the complexity of the characters". He seemed prejudiced against experimentation as a dramatic form. "It can be depressingly sterile and empty beneath the immediate theatrical brilliance of its technique."

The only critic to understand the meaning of White's impact on Australian theatre, what he attempts and what he achieves, was Harry Kippax in his introduction to the *Four Plays by Patrick White*, and Katherine Brinsford in her chapter on Australian drama in the *Penguin's Literature of Australia*.

"The controversy about the merits of Patrick White's plays involved more than their merits" writes Kippax. "It was part of a revolt by individuals, especially artists and aesthetes, against the conservatism, the timidity, the resistance to innovation of the establishment generally."

Katherine Brinsford saw White as playwright breaking "the spell of naturalism and the formal play, abandoning the dichotomies in order to give himself creative freedom to express the country of the mind, its needs, its engagement force; the contradictory side and flow of human life, the moral education of his characters and so."

All White's plays have a strong moral structure, and the central figure is often the artist as watcher/creator.

In *The Room Fanned* the Young Man both watches and explains the play to us, as well as participating in the action. He has something of "the artist as young pig" about him: his wish to become a writer, like Roy Child in *A Season at Sarsaparilla*. The *Room Fanned* traces the moral education of the Young Man, and at the conclusion, like Lawrence's Paul Morel in *Sons and Lovers* he moves out into the world more prepared for its exigencies, more and more adult, because of his experience in the house of the Lutyens.

The *Room Fanned* has two other archetypal White figures: Miss Lutyens, the landlady, the mother-such figure with her unrecruited, sexual, carnal fleshiness is central to novels, short stories and plays. She appears in different guises, but is essentially the same as the novels in Miss Goodhead (*Sisters in the Church*), Nancy Lightfoot (*The Forestry*) and Mrs Whitely in the short story "Down at the Darg" (*The Short Story*). She is sister-under-the-skin to Nola Bapin in *A Season at Sarsaparilla*, and Miss Gooding, the guest-woman, in *Night on Wolf Mountain*.

Will Lutyens, the landlady, is another central White figure. Will knows, he is transfixed by his situation and illumination: heartache, simple, good, he embodies the values of simplicity and humility like Stan Parker in *The Tree of Man* or Arthur Brown in *The Solid Mandala*. "I am content", says Lutyens, "This house is life."

He is a serene being, the landlady, made his underbelly, embodying the God and beast in man, both of which must be acknowledged and brought into unity for a full acceptance of life.

As Stan Parker looks at his job of agate and sets God, Will Lutyens touches the table with his hands and says "This table is love, if you can get to know it." Through simplicity and isolation one that reaches the kingdom. Lutyens is the first in a long line of White's characters to gain some in-



The Great Lyallist
 by J.M.W. Turner (1844)
 From the collection of
 Mr. George Goring, and
 with kind permission

are the mystery behind the mystery,
he woefully speaks

It has been complained that a dead, middle-aged lead out in the Lusty Bunch, and articulate characters even when "at", can scarcely carry such a heavy dramatic weight. They are forgetting the power of silence on stage. Look at Dobell's among, imagines the force of that great, art, belly-up, strangely dignified corpse the Lusty Bunch. It is a theatrical use of enormous power, as indeed is the willard's wife, round-shouldered, peering up at her in the mirror.

No, the trouble in *The Man Funeral* does not lie with the Lusty at the chorus of music hall figures, but in the young men and his Anna, the girl, mother of Patrick, What's "woman is what", radiant, cynical, past. Two of them in *Night on Bald Mountain*, Stefan Sommerhayes, and in a certain extent, the ghost of that girl in the ruined, drunken Miss Jancord in her white wedding dress, dreamy Jack Pagan with her noble presence, in *A Season at Sarapaville*.

In *The Man Funeral* the girl is entirely an abstraction. Only at the conclusion of the play does she become real, when from prison into a cathedral and shadowy Phyllis Butler.

In *A Season at Sarapaville* the wanderer/commutator in Ray Child, the young schoolteacher, who leaves the scene of the play for his great outside, but his escape will only be temporary. Sarapaville will always bring him back "because of course I shall get back. You can't shed your skin — even if it stings like hell." These commutator figures are cherry devices and rightly used as old husband and distracting today. In both plays these young men seem to embody much of What's own impotence, and disillusionment with Australian values, but they also have a self-critical function. Their self-absorption and grumpiness are seen as weaknesses, even as life. The artist as "a kind of parr, peering on people" says Nancy Lightfoot in *The Reservoir*. During the course of the play they do come to some kind of self-knowledge. They are either outsiders to history looked up (Thomas William's *The Glass Menagerie*) and, I believe, to What's early daily, not surprising in the commutators, trusting his audience. The cherry characters are thus placed between audience and play to explain.

These figures of the slightly enigmatic intellect, with redemptive features, finally at their apogee in Professor Good, a top intellectual of *Night on Bald Mountain*, who can write poetry and is now a life destroyer, and to a lesser extent, the young English lecturer, Dennis Crisp, who still writes poetry, and is left with some hope of redemption from the shell of the mind, and the feral house of death.

Thus "the cold murderous world of the intellect" is overthrown, and What's deprecable "man of words" get their final come-appearance. The first and final words are with Miss Quodling, who opens the

play with her justly famous soliloquy to her gods, an accommodation in nature and certainty in which her language, speech rhythms, and philosophy create field Mountain settings. It is an extraordinary monologue which manages to find the point and the soliloquy already with effortless ease. Like Jack Hubbard's Monk O'Neil in *A Street of the Imagination* Miss Quodling is one of the great post-war poets of the Australian theatre.

"All I ask is that everybody acts reasonably," says Miss Quodling, and then, in a final epiphany to the mountain, and to life, she apostrophises the landscape of beginnings. "The bare patches, with the sour grass, the breakish water seeping through. Swords break the rocks. In the spindly woods, the prickly flowers no more much — but the smell of sun."

Whole mountains I'll be and watch a bubble of air struggling with rocks of sand. Listen to the sound of pollen scattering as my toes brown off leaves and run.

Her last words are the anthem of Waiting for Godot: "There is no such thing as nothing (nothing). The silence will breed again — in peace — a world of goats perhaps even men."

Night on Bald Mountain is probably What's most dramatically mature work since his date. The archetypal characters are more complex, and set in a real/poeticized landscape which recognizes the limits of time and place.

But it is the most "difficult" of all What's plays, *A Cherry Soul*, which I find the most rewarding theatrically.

At the centre of *A Cherry Soul* is the tetrahedral archetypal figure of Miss Docker. Her awful Polyanna goodness is firstly presented to us as a disease. "She's sick with it. One must try to be kind to her." But as Mrs Liller's funeral our sense of sympathy to Miss Docker begins to be profoundly shaken. As we drive and drive in that symbolic funeral procession to the Northern Suburban Commuters where "we're going every other week" leaving Miss Docker's handmaiden against the empty sky, the car doors slammed shut against her, alone with the dust, the Mowbais and the dead heads of the busboys, not to men on the boarding which says TWO MILES TO SARAPAVILLE, THE FRIENDLY SUBURB, we are left with a question that we no longer know the answer. What is good, what is kind, what is charitable?

Miss Docker is like a terrible baby who has misread the world, and pruned the Cynicism Glory rose to death as a "flower of love". She suffers from the sin of robust virtue, and yet in the final scene of the play when God is the shape of a tragedy, insoluble, like cattle dog poses on her own pylons on a Sunday, we can all partake of her mortal sadness and her strange humbleness.

A Cherry Soul puts everything of a director the conventions of time and space: an overture, there are three acts, soliloquies, choruses, choral scenes off,

children, parades, an inevitable dog, chemical devices which seem to be like a glow the more penetrating of its initial character, so that the play does have a completely unconventional shape of its own.

There is a sharp change of style between Act One and Act Two, but it has been prepared for in the domestic device of the grapes outside the Commuter's kitchen with its various glistering grapes, and strange green pastoral light. We have been in that kitchen before in Sarapaville. It is related easily to Ben and Jerry's kitchen in *The Fire of Man* and the kitchen in *A Season at Sarapaville*. But the symbolic grapes transport us out from this suburban semi-rusticity into the surrealism of the old woman's Sandown Home. Miss Liller's funeral, and Miss Docker's final transformation in the train. The whole second section of the play is like an Elizabethan Show, a comment on the Commuter's kitchen-world, most of the action taking place before a piece, of set an empty stage with curtains. We are back again in the stylistically radical world of *The Man Funeral*, with its bizarre and brutal underpinnings, intellectual force, abstract and semi-type scenes, played before grapes or drops, but the make takes in *A Cherry Soul* are present on all levels, the surreal, the grotesque, the robust, more ambivalent characters like the subtle rhythms, "morning" of the dialogue, and the literary moral scene.

Here are no pale, young, multi-able virgins, and perhaps, perhaps, perhaps, perhaps, perhaps young men as long as through the journey of Eschyrism and Everywoman, the White is dealing thematically with these Australian "forbidden" subjects, old age and death.

It is also worth commenting on What's female characters. Of all Australian male dramatists in his writing most sympathetically and powerfully about women. His mother-earth figures can only be compared to Peter Kenna's Aggie in *A Hard God*, but the stage is much wider and more universal. The spiritual and innocent girls develop from the young girl in *The Man Funeral* to Stefan Sommerhayes in *Night on Bald Mountain*, a figure continually compared to wildflowers, herbs, sunlight, and all the elements of nature.

From the adolescent girl children in *A Season at Sarapaville* to the tender postures of the old ladies in the Sandown Home in *A Cherry Soul*, What's sympathies fall gently on the side of the women.

Those of us in the Australian theatre who work in the area of experimentation, surrealism and symbolic language, are perhaps only now beginning to evaluate the debt we owe to Patrick White's earlier work, to realize that our traditional pub theatre of revue and rough knockabout farce, refined in the plays of Boddy and Ellis, Jack Hubbard, Ron Mann, John Rammell and Barry Oakley, has its most sophisticated expression in *The Man Funeral* and *A Cherry Soul*.

Carlton Designs by Peter Corrigan

Peter Corrigan graduated as an architect from Melbourne University in 1966 and was registered in 1967. While at the University he designed sets and costumes for fourteen student productions, ranging from *Hamlet* in a tent to *The Birthday Party* and *Fear*.

He subsequently did post-graduate work and taught at Yale University in the Architecture School. While at Yale he was involved next door in the Drama School with the Design Department and the Yale Rep.

For the next five years he worked as both an architect and stage designer in Melbourne. Theatrical experience

included designing for a range of OHL Broadway companies — the last being at La Merne Theatre and the Playhouse of the Renaissance.

At the end of 1973, the Australian Opera Company flew him back to Sydney to design sets and costumes for John Bell's production of *Don Giovanni* in the Opera House. Since his return he has designed five productions with the Australian Performing Group, including *Beasts*, *The Master* and *Rosencrantz's Pleasant World*.

He is now resident in Melbourne and his time is divided between a private architecture practice and the Australian Performing Group.

CITY SLUR

One night I went to the local Drive-In to see Brian de Palma's "Passions of the Opera". In this movie, Paul Williams played a deranged rock composer who threw extravagant spasms all over his circular disk. That particular piece of film art prompted the disk and film design I prepared to Ian Giles, the director of the show. The acid green colour scheme, the silver pots and the tilted gold-framed mirror somehow just seemed to follow naturally.

A FLOATING WORLD

The audience were transported by silver wire limes and directed through silver wire grass. Inside this compound, the vaguely shipboard forms, the almost topographic green paint job, the dinner sized diameter (the red sea) container, the duck charts and diggy birds, all constituted the images of Ian Harding's night mare world.

The audience watched and waited as Ian Harding took the Cherry Blossom cruise to Tokyo and his supposed memories of Chang surfaced, and ultimately drove him mad.

This was all just hand work.

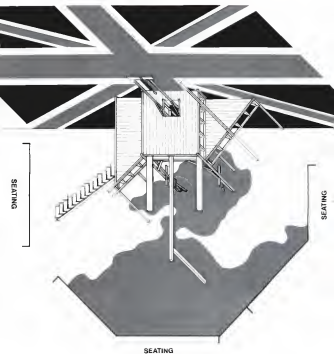


PEERING OUTERS

The play was located on colonial
Victoria's 19th Century prison hulks. They
were moored off Wollumetown in Port
Philip Bay, and inhabited by convict-type
figures.

The set was grafted together by sewing up
Carol Porter's "My Foot My Tute!" set,
and propping up the resultant lumber on
poles.

The flag was the property of a Collective
member while the map, one of the Bay,
was painted onto the floor in Imperial Red
and Blue.





THE MOTHER

There was no colour used whatsoever to establish mood with this set. It depended mostly on Duchamp, Gershowski's Paper Theatre, and the annual A.P.G. liquidity crisis.

The cast was offered a grab bag of unassuming, everyday wooden objects, e.g. planks, boxes, and cups. The prod actors depended upon them being unstead with magic and meaning. In many aspects it was particularly great Brechtian design.



CRACKERS AT THE SAVOY

After two weeks with no ideas, this set was the result of a formal visit to the filthy Berkeley's modest tenner cottage in Pratham. It proved to be a lower end's nest full of china ducks, old movie posters, bamboo furniture, worn fruit and flesh trash.

John Pinder and I climbed over the back fence of the neighbourhood green grocer and secured 48 timber fruit cases.

Suzanne Spencer, if I remember correctly, adjudged it her best set for the season. Best one.



CANNED PEACHES

The night before I saw an old Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire movie in which they danced their way through a number of softy art deco sets. I took the palm trees from one, the pyramids from another. There is the adroitly and cross-referenced, not unconsciously I thought, to P. L. Cohen's sphinx-like smile.

I really don't know where these magnificent sets came from.

Jerry Grotowski proposed poverty in the theatre as an alternative to Rich Theatre. The later attempts to compete with films or T.V. by means of borrowed mechanisms, sophisticated technical plant or the dynamics of "total theatre". His Polish Theatre Laboratory happened to be strapped for money at the time, but they viewed their situation as an exciting theatrical opportunity not a crushing burden. In this spirit the A.P.C. presents "The Mother". We are not concerned with the juggling of radical chic ideas, but rather with the assuming of professional responsibilities.

This "poor design" attempts to examine the inherent nature of humble objects and cheap clothing. It is not a destructive Bada gesture. It is not an attempt to purge by anti-design. Objects have an independent life of their own. We seek to coax it out.

Our production invests a room, windows, shirts, some crates, coats, planks, dresses, twelve chairs, socks, etc. with meaning in relationship to a theatrical performance. It invites spectators to fulfil their own needs. We do not view you as instruments.

This design is not an end in itself. It is concerned with the act of making not being. It addresses itself to work.

A map of the City of is enclosed.

*Show this to set / costume / design
to explain the cast
concept to the
they were not impressed.
They considered they were
being manipulated. So it
was left out of the program.*



'Hayes Gordon has let his head go, and it's obvious he and his cast have a ball with this one'

BOY MEETS GIRL

BARRY EATON

Boy Meets Girl by Belle and Samuel Beckett. Phoenix Theatre, Sydney. Opens 9 June 1977. Director: Warren Gordon. Designer: Doug Ashmore. Producer and director: John Fowler. Stage manager: Sarah L. Morgan.

Robert Law, John McTernan, Larry Teno, Bill Charlton, J. Carlyle Benson, Ross Hadden, Kenneth Newmann, Mr. Joddy, Gary Barker, Roger Angelo Barrett, Miss Gervy, Roscoe Davis, Rodney Brown, Michael Smith, Denis, Ira Newman, Susan, Anthony Aschland, Sandra Linda Blanton, Nurse, Christine Woodland, Doctor, Miss Mavis, Charlotte, John Higgins, Young Man, Hugh Royle, Sheila O'Brien, Frank Malone, Doctor, Michael Cummings, Nurse, Andrea Ferraro, Major Thompson, Roger Knight, Robin Innesworth, Bob Miller, Radio Announcer, Ed Walker.

A visit to the Hollywood fantasyland of its golden best could hardly have been any zanner than *Boy Meets Girl*. Reconstructing it from 1915, director Hayes Gordon sets a sparkling pace for his cast in Sydney's Ensemble Theatre.

The story revolves around a typical (?) movie producer's office during the heyday of the cinematograph that will save the studios from financial ruin (Where have I heard that before?) Felling and fighting it out out of this setting are the actors, writers, agents, movie stars, secretaries, cameramen, young hopefuls and all the other familiar Hollywood types.

Our two heroes are Robert Law (John McTernan) and J. Carlyle Benson (Ross Hadden), the madcap writing duo whose basic formula for success has always been boy meets girl, boy loses girl and boy finds

girl again. There is a rare hint of originality (they came up with the ultimate in child stars, "Happy", straight from his mother's womb).

We are by now so familiar with the Hollywood of the era, via old TV movies, that acceptance of all the mad characters and frenetic activity comes easily. There is a thousandfold riot of madcap scenes and a good running gag involving trumpets that is directly used to finish the show. I must admit I half-expected the Marx Brothers to appear suddenly and take over the stage. Indeed, John McTernan does use some typical Groucho pieces of business.

The dialogue is full of great one-liners, so you would expect Larry Teno (Bill Charlton), the swaggering cowboy star, is described by his agent as an outdoor man. Robert Law retorts, "Flash! So's my garbage man".

Hayes Gordon has chosen his large cast well for the most part. John McTernan acts most again and old hat makes the show. So understated as an actor, his chosen for recognition must be just across the corner. He and Ross Hadden team well at the "boys" always in trouble, always joking their way out of it and, of course, winning on the end. Bill Charlton is perfect as the slow-witted, dreading, but-bene cowboy star. Gary Barker, resembling like James Cagney, as the movie producer, and Steve Pickett as the city agent, both give good performances.

The only typical character missing from the line up is the story-crazed-beautiful-comely and temperamental female star. Sandra Linda Blanton, former (nearly) named mother of child star, is our ingenious and smiling roomie (and Rodney Brown (Michael Smith) is the bumble-brained young idiot Englishman who lurches into her life (Hollywood's sympathetic young lovers).

Apart from dull spots in the middle of the second and third acts, *Boy Meets Girl* rattles on at a good pace. I suspect these spots are more in the writing than the playing.

My stars head is with the actors. For

some reason every Australian actor has trouble with the gringing and rustling of an American western. There are a couple of genuine accents in the cast and some reasonable attempts. But, on the whole, this feature is a jarring note in the production.

Accents aside, Hayes Gordon has let his head go, and it's obvious he and the cast have a ball with this one. I'm sure audiences will react accordingly.

(Being an old movie fan helps!)

'It can be fun . . . watching the desperate lover trying to bring the lady to bed'

THE HAPPY HUNTER

NORMAN KESSELL

The Happy Hunter by Georges Feydeau. The Malthus St. Theatre Company. Malthus St. Theatre, Sydney, NSW. Opens 30 May, 1977. Director: Alanine Brown. Designer: Brian Nickless. Builder: Michael Haller. Treasurer: Lynn Kesteven. Dr. Roscoe, Philip Wilson, Charcoal, Mark Hachfeldt, Robert, Gary Philip, Pierre, Ramona Parker, Corinne, Al Thomas, Malvina Le Comte, de L'Ordon, Marlene Jones, Inspector David, Bennett Lane.

Feydeau is Feydeau in Feydeau, a respected colleague commenced after having seen *The Happy Hunter* at Sydney's Malthus St Theatre.

True enough, this less well-known of the prolific Georges a 60-old plays follows fully the all-too-familiar formula. Feydeau achieved a probable popularity by his skill in drawing so many personalities from a comparatively small bag of topical situations, all of them centred on the bedroom.

In this piece a husband, Charcoal, per-

under a tramway with Yvonne, that on his frequent absences from home he is happily leaving rabbits and hares, and occasionally pheasants, with his Spanish blood Castle.

When the discoverer is in a fit, enjoying dalliance with his mistress, and that the "trap" he carefully brings home is stolen from a butcher's shop, the discoverer is invited for dinner by pushing to the importance of a would-be lover, Ransom.

It's a Feydina! But that his heroines remain virtuous, so we know this is a seduction that will not be consummated. It can be fun, however, watching the discoverer lower trying to bring the lady to bed.

This is, of course, the spot for the routine trousers-dropping technique, and for once that useful garment has a key role in the play!

The remarkable coincidence that the would-be seducer's love-seat is in the same building as that of the husband's mistress conveniently brings all the protagonists seeing the time for the good stable colleague comes.

To complete the line-up, enter a police inspector, David, called on by Castle to apprehend his wife's lover, unaware that said lover is, in fact, his good friend, Chandel. Also Chandel's nephew, Perre, using a key given him by a former occupant of Ransom's apartment, can fill. All very neat, isn't it?

The unrelated chase starts when the police inspector, David, arrives the wrong man. In the frantic efforts by all to avoid unwanted confrontations, split-second decisions keep the pot boiling as they race in and out of immovable doors, windows, cupboards and streets.

I hardly need add that a blend of black-and-white and qualified forgiveness pervades the happy ending.

Barnett Shaw's English adaptation acutely captures the Gallic flavor and naughtiness but not unbecomingly of Feydina's (over)township, to which the required elements of style and charm have been imparted by Monsieur Alphonse Daudet. That other moment for this type of connection, pace, took a while to work up the night I was there, but eventually it was there.

I liked how Philip Huxton's detailed portrait of the safety house, Ransom, using with great effect every movement, gesture and expression in the *Journal's* repertoire.

Lynn Rankin's atmosphere, smartly dressed with just the right blend of outraged wit and rabid retaliation. Al Thomas was spot-on as the bemused and befuddled Castle, especially in his exchanges with Mark Rankinfield's appropriately flustering Chandel.

Barnett Farber was an engaging and memorable young Percy Kennedy. And a shy old police inspector who is also, he kept repeating, a man of the world, Marion Johns a painted hag of a concubine and Gayle Peck a mazy, hip-swinging maid.

Period dressing, as always at this theatre, was excellent, and designer Brian Nickless provided a pastel-hued, stylized

and highly expressive double-purpose set for the construction of which Richard Muller received a well-merited programme credit.

'To speak for an audience, instead of to it, is one of the keys to its capture'

THE RENOVATORS
THE PEOPLE SHOW NUMBER ONE

MARGUERITE WELLS

The Renovators by David Williamson. Riverside Tramping Company at its heart is *Q & A*, Sydney, NSW, August 9 June 1977. Director, Terry O'Connell. Design, Fred Lynn.

Sergeant, Sammonds, Eric Hillis, Constable Ross Noel Smith, Kate Mason, Jenny Leifer, Paula Connor, Janet Harkin, Jenny Carter, Mark Tagher, Rob, the policeman, Greg Mack, wife.

The People Show Number One derived by the Riverside Tramping Company at its heart is *Q & A*, Sydney, NSW, August 9 June 1977. Original songs by Terry O'Connell, lighting, Fred Lynn, costumes, Eleanor McDonald and Peter Foley, music, Murray Rob, Collier, Kim Hillis, Barbara Koster, Terry O'Connell, Miles O'Meara, Gary Prince, Peter Wright.

Part of the very considerable charm of the Riverside Tramping Company's productions is the warmth of their relationship with their audience. It is "their" audience from the start, for the army of helpers who hammer and paint, lead, in this case, cook and wait at tables, continue to grow, and the number of *Wagga-wagga* — and others — who were willing to invest ten dollars and live home in a night at the theatre is enough to make any other theatre company, professional or otherwise, choke with chagrin. But then, both the scale and the company have an almost instant knowledge of just where to find their audience's soft spot, and of how to impart a glow of warmth and well-being.

The Renovators opened the programme, and we would have gone away satisfied with an evening's evening, strong on verbal wit and comedy technique, if not, perhaps, an inspiration, except that, followed by orange juice or wine we were pre-occupied into the beguiling world of *The People Show Number One*. By quarter time, *The Renovators* had moved to the status of a mere curtain-raiser, a warm-up in preparation for the real thing.

The People Show (and we hope that *Number One* is, as the title implies, the first of a series), is a hilarious collection of monologues — "The thoughts, opinions, observations and feelings of *Wagga people*" — interspersed with songs, some of them original, and all of them a redoubtable vote of confidence in the pop song genre.

If your heart sinks at the prospect of an

evening of the thoughts, opinions, observations and feelings of *Wagga people*, then perhaps you are not alone, but you are wrong. From the heart-warming pleas of the general who found Kruth children featured as Woolies' "Chorus of the World", to the Catholic mother, who, to save his soul while maintaining his sailing time, would stand in his own many weeks and clashing his surfboard, in company with a thousand other *Wagga* heads, outside the church (where the overflow of the sailing congregation was faced to congregate in secret silence) throughout the Mass, the monologues had a warmth of humour and charm with which only the most morose critic could wish to quarrel. Certainly the audience had no complaints. Every word of laughter flowed through both cast and audience. The cast had the responsiveness of musicians, come as dialogue to utterance at night, yet knowing that their audience knows full well who they are in the day, and is glad to see them in both their capacities.

The cast for *The Renovators* should have been the cast for *The Coming of Saint*, but when Tramping Company member Ron Moffat was chosen to join the Australian "team" at the International Children's Theatre Festival, the company and number of those cast re-shuffled in which a beginning to speeches, and Eric Hillis, who was to have been a very short *Stork*, became a medium-sized, but singularly pathetic, pitiful, laboured and authoritative Sergeant Sammonds, whose force carried through to the end of the play. Act 1, as a series of interviews — of Constable Ross comes on his first posting to a two-man police station, and of the two women, come to lay a complaint against a wife-beating husband — is highly varied and almost memorably short. Slightly more courage and less condescension would have lifted the performance, but this very deliberation meant that every joke at the script came through with maximum clarity. Act 2, full of pretexts and humorous monologues, had as much visual life as one could hope for as an Australian foreign room comedy, the violence was absolutely convincing and the pace of the police at their victim's death had such a sense of urgency that it gave retrospective tension to the rest of the play.

The gleaming white set made a police station which, like its sergeant, had an air of complacent wholesomeness. In the second act it became an apparently bare and ultra-boring modern lounge, and then, with sky-blue rooms and chairs, a screen for the slides which were the backdrop and the lighting for *The People Show Number One*. The set was versatility and financial and artistic economy all in one.

Behind the Mask comedy of *The Renovators* is anger. Behind the humorous warmth of *The People Show Number One*, where each monologue has a sizzling sting of laughter in the tail, is the anger of powerlessness. It was this angling undertone of anger suppressed through laughter, that bound those two works into

one evening of theatre, and was the audience totally. To speak for an audience, instead of to it, is one of the joys to its capture.

'For me . . . this production's main appeal stems from clever use of the York Theatre's thrust stage'

WILD GOATS

NORMAN KISSNELL

Wild Goats, by John O'Keefe. Old Tote Theatre Company. York Theatre, Seymour Centre. Sydney. Opened 10 June 1977. Director: Mark Fiedler. Designer: Andy Fraser. Music by Myron Drake. Lighting: Andrew Pate.

John Dory, Garth Mordaunt, George Thander, Richard Meade, Elysean Smith, Terry Drew, Lucy Armstrong Thander, Alan Gegg, Harry Thander, Kenna Newman, Midge Bell, Grahame, Terry Baker, Christopher, Lisa Graham, Frances Gorman, Rosamund Murray, Sue Murray Drake, Jim, Aliphil, Kenna, Ron Macmillan, Titch, Les Marlow, Masters, Johnstone, Jennifer West, Kenna, Edward Howell, Andrew, Phillipa Baker.

The Old Tote Theatre Company's programmes are always commendably informative and that for John O'Keefe's *Wild Goats* playing a short Sydney season at the Seymour Centre's York Theatre, is no exception.

Only notable omissions to mention that this 18th-century farce was retrieved from obscurity by the Royal Shakespeare Company and staged at London's Aldwych Theatre last December.

Not is the *Oxford Companion to the Theatre* credited with the quoted information that O'Keefe (1747-1813) was an Irish dramatist who wrote his first play at 13. As an actor he was a member of Messaj's crack company in Dublin for 12 years. At 25 his sight began to fail and

eventually he went blind, but he continued to write, mainly farces and light operas, the latter containing many well-known songs.

Of his more than 70 works, the most popular, especially in America, were *The Four Soldiers* (1783) and *Wild Goats* (1791). The latter was last staged at Drury Lane in 1820.

English critic William Hazlitt called O'Keefe "the English Molière", but, as the *Oxford Companion* wisely comments "in view of the total disappearance of all his work from the stage, this comparison can hardly be justified."

While the revival most greatly that appraisal, O'Keefe is certainly no Molière. While Hazlitt with us today, he might more accurately describe O'Keefe as an 18th-century Don Quixote.

Here are the typical multiplicity of oddball characters, the misunderstandings, the mixed identities, the endless couings and goings through innumerable entrances and exits. Also a Galilean cousin of a mislaid husband and one whose rediscovery restores the latter to his



upheld place among the gentry, thereby creating fun to woe the lovely Isadora.

He is Rover, the Strolling Gentleman of the play's sub-title, most elegantly played by Terry Rinder. She is Lady Amaranth, a gentle and gracious Quaker aristocrat sensibly impressed by the history of her own servants and, as played by the otherwise very personable Anne Gregg, a bit mistle-toe-loving for the happy Rinder's wooing.

The tangled plot has Richard Melville, an Captain George Thorne, still married talk and civil on his, planning to marry his son Harry off to Lady Amaranth for the sake of her fortune. Meanwhile, Robin Browning, as Harry, has dropped from naval college because he wants to become an actor. He and Rover meet on the road and become friends, then go their separate ways.

Next, the captain's water de chauberte John Dory — with Garth Mowbray, whom I have seen before only in revue, appearing as a droll-misted woman — mistakes Rover for the missing Harry. Harry decides to take advantage of this and continue the impersonation to try to impress Lady Amaranth, who is only too ready to respond.

Confusion now piles on confusion, with sub-plots that include Raymond Martin as a grasping former settler to foreclose on an elderly brother and sister (Ron Russell and Philippa Baker) and again then from their cottage, the beautiful portrait of Jane, former Governor's simple daughter (Alfreda) by Lady Amaranth's Malvololian cousin, Ephraim Smeath (Harry Gray), and the captain's pursuit of three naval delects. Other complications come from a challenge to a duel and from Rover's collaboration with an ambitious entrepreneur, Lamp (Edward Howell), to enthrone members of the household in a production of *de Fox Like It*. Decisively and sometimes miraculously, most of the loose ends are tied off in time for the customary concluding bows.

The play opens slowly, but gathers momentum and momentum as the characters develop, particularly that of Rover, whose dialogue is cheekily laced with quotations from Shakespeare (particularly appropriate to the moment and also — on the authority of *Plays and Playgoers* critic David Mayer — with lines from *Osway*, *Bedfordshire*, *Pickering*, *Rome* and other lesser-known works).

For me, however, this production's main appeal stems from clever use of the York Theatre's thrust stage by director Mark Rodger and designer Anne Fraser. Comparisons with photographs of the London production indicate this treatment is entirely original.

Rodger has many of the cast sitting or reclining on the semi-circular surround of the stage, rising whenever necessary to respond to a cue and join in the action. I do not know whether it is in the script or not, but having one of the players (Iain Munro) acting as stage manager and wielding a gavel to signal and announce

changes of scene, is another very effective device.

Anne Fraser has provided a sort of ballet floor backing which at first sight looks like a vast jute-shop display of huge antique tapestries, a piano, a couch, a velvet chair, and with holders on either side to hold them above.

Every one of these items is used for entrances and exits, so is a theatrical costume basket forward on stage and also steps leading below stage down which a couple of characters tumble alarmingly.

Impassioned music, played by a trio in one of the balconies, is by sister Mervyn Drake, who also gives an amusing performance as Son, the farmer's garrulous son.

What I assume is a deliberate piece of self-enamoring in that Jennifer West as a heady and Liza Grayson as a serving wench expose much of their ample charms, but the well-endowed Alfreda, who is delighted as the curtain falls, remains completely covered.

The Q goes west — and is alive and doing very well

A HARD GOD

FRANK HARRIS

A Hard God by Peter Keane. Q Theatre, Perth, New South Wales. Opened 22 June 1977. Director, Kerrie Davidson, designer, Andrew Davis.

Agnes, Carolyn, Dorcas, Warburton, Dan Cassidy, Ron Hackett, Jack Shannon, Mark Herbert, Joe Cassidy, Geoff Ross, Martin Cassidy, Richard Ross, Paddy Kennedy, Les Taylor, Martin Cassidy, Liza Vanden.

The Q Theatre, badly missed in Sydney for its hands-on shows over many years, is alive and doing very well in its western district pioneering version.

Perth, Parramatta and Bendigo are its venues. Many patrons had never seen live theatre before, I was told. Cheers for the Q!

After a knock-out success with *Lord Up Your Daughters* and *Clara's Place* the *Stoker Saw*, they look like having another hit with a revival of Peter Keane's *A Hard God*.

Keane, who first hit the spotlight with his prize-winning *Slingers* of St Terence's Day, has written his best play so far in *A Hard God*, and that's allowing for his latest work, *After*.

I saw *A Hard God* on opening night at the company's base theatre in Perth, one of the most comfortable and sparsely seated in-the-round theatres I have visited.

A Hard God is a wonderfully sympathetic and acutely observed picture of an Irish Catholic family, beleaguered and with fairly rigid religious codes, but lost and baffled in their standards when they come to the city lights in Sydney.

There's Agnes, the eternal mother figure, husband Dan, who is dying of cancer but who keeps bawling his "hard God" doctrine the troubles which engulf him like the biblical Job.

Martin, the older brother, is married to a religious bigot, Monica, and writes passionate poetry on the fly.

Paddy, the younger brother, used to drink, gambled, bawled, is a desperate little coward, always prating religion, but, like Father, getting out of the tight spots as quickly as he can.

As the group gets together, there are brawls and incendiary letters, full of hot comedy as well as touching, wrenching moments. Kevin Jackson, dancing, handled these very well.

Dorcas Warburton, the driving force behind the Q Theatre's western district venture, played Agnes splendidly.

Danica doesn't fall into the trap of playing for blatant comedy, although the laughs pop up plenty.

Much to my liking, she's the natural woman, born by all the religious trappings of the Cassidy mob around her, but with her mind firmly fixed on the only true way to earthly salvation — survival is tough stuff.

She's always questioning where the next slice of bread comes from before she gives thanks.

A novel experimental touch was the split-screened Keane read. The Cassidy family scenes are understated with speediness in which Agnes's son Joe is involved in a homosexual incident with his friend Jack.

It's the youngest generation still caught in the family background, and worried by Church rules. Jack breaks free, but Joe is abandoned, left only with vague hopes of another happy companionship.

This was the only part of the show which didn't work, possibly because of first-night nerves, and more probably because of the tricky stage bridge on which they had to work. Still, Joe (Geoff Ross) made good at his last scene.

At the start of Act 2, Martin, who never sets down to rest without a successful prayer, is dead. There's a mystery here. Did his cancer succumb when he apparently fell over a cliff on a job or was he pushed by those who hated his ideas on an on?

But there's no mystery about his widow, Monica. Over-madness in religion, she's a frozen being, elegantly dressed and flaccid in behaviour, lost in a dream of heavenly rewards, which is totally divorced from the life around her.

A babby, difficult role, but sensitively written by Keane and beautifully played by Liza Vanden.

Best support was Les Taylor as the cowardly Paddy and Ron Hackett as Dan. Richard Brooks (Martin) needed a slightly stronger projection.

But the crowning touch came from Dorcas Warburton in the curtain scene, uttering prayers to her half-forgotten God to save dying Dan, and expressing an agony of loneliness in final silence. She was superb.

'A very theatrical piece of work, and more than usually well directed'

FUNNY PECULIAR

ROBELLIS

Funny Peculiar by Mike Scott. Presented by J.C. Williamson Productions Ltd and Michael Copley (International Pty Ltd). Theatre Royal Sydney. Opens 18 June 1977. Director, Jeffrey Gurnett. Designer, Patrick Robertson. Lighting/Technical Director, Sue Phillips. Cast: Lindsay Lister-Jones, Ben A.J. Elston, Bryan Harcourt, Trevor Tynan, George Layton, Sgt. Harry Aspinall, Gordon Glenwright, Mrs Baldry, Liane Vaggie, Stanley Baldry, Bruce Spence, Stanley Bone, Maude Gleadow, Eric Smith, John Hume, Desmond Ashely, Helen Saps, Stuart Proctor, Bruce Harrison.

Any theatre audience, remarked the *Johns Censor* of Thornton Wilder's *The Ides of March*, feels impelled to respond to any play with the moral standards of the last generation but one. The twinging-young-excessive audience of *Funny Peculiar*, accordingly reacted with squeals of delighted shock at the nudity, sexuality, homosexuality and on-stage fillings that they could have had any night at home. But to their credit they reacted as well with sympathy, philosophical absorption and grateful

applause to the darker levels of the play which for me were totally unexpected in such a work and very descriptive of my lonely day mood.

In summary, the play seems more profitable than it is. Terence, an ardent anti-town glower inspired by much comic literature, seeks new sexual horizons outside of marriage and when subsequently in traction, is alarmed to hear how loose his normal little wife is looking there, too, in the large and welcoming bed of the self-same swinging couple from whom he has learned so much. The *Funny Peculiar* of the title, however, refers not to his wayward principal urges and their attendant metropolitan bedfellows, it refers as well to the other, more helpful figures in the play — the devout war who after an egregious village scandal brings himself from the balcony of the church steeple (in a black comic canvas-roose more reminiscent than it should be of Christopher Marlowe's *The Philologist*), Mrs Baldry, the village busy-body, a character more or less left over from Ben Jonson, who upon on her neighbor's infidelities and reports them in lecherous detail to their drunken ardent spouses, her son Stanley, the village idiot, whose chief personal sexual pastimes are the fondling of mice and frogs, loud discussion of their funny little sexual ways and wild dreams of unbridled sexual congress with David, a female morphological acquaintance now, alas, under lock and key, and Stanley's wife Irene, whose very "mor-

malness" is being shocked at her husband's infidelity, sobbing, despairing and wanting a divorce, in on this day and age looked on as highly peculiar. Her despairing soliloquy on the hopelessness of her existence (surprisingly well performed by Katy Wild) is topped only by Mrs Baldry's parallel soliloquy (almost as well performed by Liane Murphy) on how the first time she saw her husband fully naked was when he was dying, and his beautiful body withering away.

It's a very theatrical piece of work, and even less usually well directed by Jeffrey Gurnett, one that even often then not (though I know it's a disgusting thing to say) in its soliloquies, songs performed in the nude by moonlight, several sexual images, endless ironic buffoonery, word-conscious by twilight, prettily, petted cream-puffs, and worse deeper at the thoughtless of man's existence, reminded me of the darker comedies of Shakespeare. It's neither an odd nor a vast thrilling comparison. Mr Scott has as sure a sense of the contemporary audience (always going three steps farther than I'd have thought possible), and as deft a hand for the juxtaposition of rude force and nature's arrow. He may not yet have achieved the remembrance, but on the face of it credit and cunning he's looking very good.

As Terence, George Layton is confident, a suggesty, dress-coded archetype for all seasons. Bruce Spence is less than comfortable (and with good reason) in his all-weather typewriter in the gungling critic,

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252

and John Barton and Wendy Garscote are sister and golden as the swifter Gordon Glenwright does a hoarse cameo as the constable ("If every poofier dragged himself from the believe we'd all be dead with the changing"), and Brian Blaisdell is good in his dual roles as the sadistic vicar and the vocalised and foul-mouthed hospital patient deprived for medical reasons of one of his balls. During the hurricane of the cross-pollin Heave Sings as the terrorist explosion displays a rigid, measured and somewhat ungladful as artificial Buster Keaton's. But the humour is narrowly to Gary Wild, whose enormous dorking humourism left me shivering, like a leaf in all, an extraordinary, traditional, original, bad, good, not bad, mediocre (in terms of propaganda value), revolutionary night out.

'... the rare confidence of the production... takes the play by the forelock'

MY CHAD ABOUT NOTHING

KATHARINE BELGRANT

March Adelaide Festival featuring William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1771)

Director John Bell, designer Larry Raftery, costume designer, Ben Carpenter, lighting, Stephen Morrison, music composed by Dennis McKinnon

Cast: Gordon McDougall, Peter Skelton, Kenneth Blaisdell, Anna Valdes, Ursula, Maxine Blaisdell, Don Pedro, Don John, Gary Lloyd-Jones, Kenneth, Peter Carroll, Claudio, Tony, William, Corrado, Peter North, Barbara, Robert Alexander, Peter Francis, Alan Tolan, Dagoberto, Don Francisco, Tegan, Alan Tolan, A Scott, Tony Lloyd-Jones, John, Antonio, Dennis Scott

There can be no question, on the evidence, of the success of the current Shakespeare season at the Marmot Theatre. John Bell's productions of *Twelfth Night* and *Much Ado About Nothing* make him arguably the best director of Shakespeare we have in the 1970s.

Nearer of them are definitive productions and inevitably they have aroused controversy. The casting of a boy in the role of Viola, for example, distracted many people's attention. What these offer — and audiences have responded to it — is not compromise but the same reality, that same confrontation with the flesh and blood of the actor, that first brought John Bell to our attention as a director in 1970 with *The Legend of King O'Malley*.

The location of *Much Ado About Nothing* is Messina. In this production, a mixture of the successful 1971 one with Anna Valdes as Beatrice and Peter Carroll as Benedick, Bell has utilised upon the Mediterranean setting both in visual colour

and a strong sense of the clan structure which frames that society. Within that structure the blood conspiracy, the protection of women and the preservation of honour, the elaborate rituals of the wedding — all so comfortably the period in music — Tony Lloyd-Jones's Don John is a little Napoleonic, out of his time, others might be drawn from the present day. An originally conceived, Larry Raftery's set was a device best in which Leonardo, Governor of Messina, subtly showed his family and understood the Prince of Arragon and his friends.

Ben Carpenter's costumes are concerned to expand this sense of a congregation of peasants and slaves. The hunting in the new production is still there, there is a new two-level set made over from *Twelfth Night* and painted primary colours. The present set adds little to the design of the play's action, rather it adds a new prominence to the larger circle — Lena Park, perhaps. It matters little to the audience, developed in hunting and hunting, McKinnon's music, music, they find themselves in jolly, outgoing company at a family party.

The point of controversy, however, in this production is not the visually vivid style but the playwright's account. "Can we possibly justify," one critic said, "a jewel of the English language being played in such a context?" Unless, of course, they are a company of Italian prosopopeists. And again "Is a disgusting, in the meaning obscenity, in its atrociousness?" Or don't it, in fact, attest the audience's comprehension? All the evidence, of course — the packed houses, the laughter, the building interest, the burning enjoyment of the schoolboys who surrounded me in the audience — point to the production being an even more successful season than its previous season in 1971.

Perhaps it was the expectation, this time — I admit that first time round I found some of the events trivial and obscuring and they tended to pale after the first scene or two. In this new production the direct, more deliberate, consistent and penetrating in its use of the text. It reflects a general consciousness on detail, particularly of the external — the timing of business, the pointing of emphases — that characterises the present production.

The reason I liked the account was a simple one that it provided a communal reality within which the actors could work and a bridge of familiarity over which the audience might approach the play without timidity or reservation.

The problems involved in trying to find something in common between Shakespeare and the modern Australian are, of course, legion. Antisocialism, in particular, is something that makes us uneasy. We have no sense of natural hierarchy and the antagonism of the nobility would seem pretty remote to our experience of life. That is why the study of Shakespeare as often becomes a duty, an effort of will, instead of an enlightening experience. John Bell's production of *Much Ado About*

Nothing knocks the stuffing out of such unencompassing reverence and brings the audience's attention and affection directly on the people and events on a stage.

The chief location area of the technique by Beatrice and Benedick, Claudio and Hero. Peter Carroll's rough, amiable soldier, part-come part-brother, engaging with the audience in every opportunity and paired with the swinging peasant liberality of Anna Valdes's Beatrice, makes of their affair a public event in which their mutual affection, transparent from the first, is blessed in happy salutes across the arena. This Benedick was with his role in *The Christmas Carol* to be his best performance yet. Anna Valdes's Beatrice is equally a landmark in her career. In this and her Claudio she has discovered a new warmth and affinity behind her elegance which gives a new quality to her acting.

Bell is, of course, right in exploring the Italian blood to explain the vindictive behaviour of the villain, Don John, and the gullibility of Claudio. A man of experience at arms, Claudio is naive as matters of human nature. He falls in love with the first girl he meets on leave, postpones her into marriage, does a quick scene after falling, for a crude trick to disfigure her bride and an about-face when ended by death proves her innocent. He then takes the next partner offered him, does a full circle and ends up with the reconnected Hero as if nothing had happened since the beginning of the drama. Shakespeare makes a point of tripping up his characters when they attempt a too hasty marriage. Claudio's marriage looks doomed to fail but on its face. The real marriage in the play is that of Beatrice and Benedick. Here of long-lasting, marriage and tolerance.

The one reservation I have in this area is the interpretation of Hero. The young women among Shakespeare's lovers have a way of being more level-headed than their men and more conscious. The direction of Deborah Kennedy's Hero as a half-green schoolgirl is at odds with the dialogue and Miss Kennedy's potential in the role. As Claudio, Tony Skelton is splendid — a difficult feat to follow John Wilson's memorable performance last year. Also seen in the cast is Gordon McDougall, who makes a good democratic Leonardo, at home in this turn of a house. Don Francisco's audience-rapper, Dagoberto, returns, complete with hammer tooth and police whistle, lighting a pitched battle with his malapropisms. A genuine original. Others who make up the ensemble include Maggie Blaisdell, replacing Mikko Juller as Ursula, the dependable Alan Tolan as the Friar and Verger, and Robert Alexander and Dennis Scott as Don John's conspirators.

Tony Lloyd-Jones, who plays Don John as a masterful opportunist, a Carabosse proved not being content to the party, as new one of our most considerable actors. He demonstrated his promise early and the work of the years that followed in new living first in a repertoire of wide range and poignancy. In August he will under-

take his biggest challenge yet when he undertakes the role told in the trilogy, *The Merchant of Venice*.

For Kanto's Don Pedro is also a scrupulously performance, holding the centre of the play with a relaxed authority that brings harmony to the old hierarchical world from which Shakespeare's characters spring and the new hospitalary John Bell's production often tries.

Much *Also About Nothing* is not the most difficult of Shakespeare's plays to perform, as principal characters engage their audiences and the play has a long stage history of popular success. The pleasure of this production lies not in new reads to an old thing, though they are there, but in the rare confidence of the production which takes the play by the forelock as though such had never been done before. It is a confidence not of youth and ignorance but of a slowly maturing perception that the shadows of history should not be permitted to fall between a director and his playwright, even if that playwright is Shakespeare.

One grisly charade — and two fine productions

**HAMLET
THE "NAKED" HAMLET
ROSENCRANTZ AND
GUILDENSTERN
ARE DEAD**

BEX CRAMPHORN

Hamlet by William Shakespeare. Independent Theatre, Sydney. Opened 1 June 1977. Director, Graham Dixon. Lighting design, Ross Reid. Sound design, Glen Kerr.

Hamlet, Tony Harris, Claudius, Charles Hamble, Polonius, Barnardo, Ophelia, Horatio, Peter Wright, Laertes, Robert Williams, Rosencrantz, Peter Bennett, Guildenstern, Harry Bondell, Eric, Gary Smith, Marcellus, Lucian, Elly-Hill, Gertrude, Arthur Pinner, Peter King, Arthur Pinner, Pinner Jones, Catherine Pinner, Laurence, Gary Bennett, Ian, Gavin Dwyer, Dennis, Clump, Neil, Gavin Dwyer, Barry Bennett, Pinner, Ray Williams, Rosencrantz, Christopher Rodden, Marlow, Gertrude, Lucie Clifford, Ophelia, Carole Crowther, Christ, Ray Williams, Monogram, Hugh Weir, Alexander, Ross Reid, Patrick Cuy, Pauline, Tim Bell, Francis, Michael Douglas, Volmard, Grahm Baines-Lewis.

Hamlet by William Shakespeare. Concept by Joseph Papp. Actors Company Theatre, Sydney. Opened 1 June 1977. Director, Rodney Delaney. Set design, Cedric Loring. Music, Laila Mellem.

Hamlet, Peter de Bolla, Horatio, Don Fremont, Claudius, Michael Bolla, Eric, Stuart Chalmers, Lucian, David Murray, Polonius, Bob Baines, Gertrude, Marcus D'Arcy, John, Alan Rankin, Ophelia, Kate Ferguson, Rosencrantz, Lew, Alexander, Guildenstern, Scott Lambert, Norrington, Gertie, Bob Baines, Gertrude, Bob Baines, Stuart Chalmers, Lew, Alexander, Scott Lambert, David Wheeler.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead by Tom Stoppard. The Actors Company Theatre, Sydney. Opened 1 June 1977. Director, Andrew

Dolman. Set design, Cedric Loring. Concept, Meg Ryan. Stencils, Lew, Alexander, Guildenstern, Scott Lambert, The Pinner, Alan Rankin, Alfred Stuart Chalmers, Tompkins, James McLauchlan, David Whelan, Gordon, Peter de Bolla, Ophelia, Kate Ferguson, Claudius, Michael Bolla, Gertrude, Marcus D'Arcy, Polonius, Bob Baines, Horatio, Don Fremont.

I had intended to draw a veil over my experience of the Independent's *Hamlet* — better let it pass in decent obscurity, under the gaze and its eye. But then, in one of the daily papers, I read a review of a which, in my assessment, complemented it in all departments and congratulated it on keeping a school without going. Now some years of experience with daily-paper reviews have prepared me for generalized pro and con notes and an absence of any detailed account of even the superficial appearance of the production, let alone any exposure of its meaning or intention. However, in this particular case, the grotesque accord, in kind of conspiracy of mediocrity, between the aged, aged school hall features of the production and the aged, aged slaps of the review, about general clarity and how well the children put up with it, together with the unresolvable gulf between all that production and review stand for and any sort of real experience in a theatre — well, all that has caused me to a sort of memory and (readily discernible in the overinflated space).

So, instead of drawing a veil, I'm going to describe exactly what I saw at the Independent. A flying phantasm of the foyer took in a minimum of workings (back to central peeling paint, a carpet of damp and dust and decay. With something like supernatural awe, the phantasm also took in Miss Dora Fitter, CBE, still in attendance, along with her portrait in oils. The passage down the aisle revealed an audience two-thirds full of school-children, the few adults being banded together in the front rows. A glance at the programme informed us that "Director, cast and production staff" were "giving their services to the Theatre for the duration of the season of this production". Looking up to the stage, the eye was rewarded by the spectacle of a wrinkled ephebe — the short-shouldered, put-the-back-of-the-hand effect — with a row of eyebrows on front of a and a few rows of steps. The structural columns, which form such a prominent feature of the stage space at the Independent, had come into their own and were, for once, cheerfully revealed. The lights having gone down and come up again apparently unchanged, and some word comes having got up teams, a performance of *Hamlet* which exceeded any expectations aroused by the foregoing, crackled into view.

"Crackled" is not perhaps the right word for the group who first assembled on the "bedchambers" their average age seemed to be about seventeen and I took them (perhaps wrongly) to be the property of the Independent Theatre School of Dramatic Art, advertised on the back of the

programme. The Hamlet who eventually joined them (Tony Harris) was of a somewhat more mature age, dressed in a discoloured white shirt, black velvet "doublet" and black tights — a costume, in short, that anyone could wear on a fancy-dress party with a reasonable expectation of being recognized. What he said was clearly audible and no doubt made good enough sense to those who'd done their homework. His indications of anger, grief, confusion were as sensibly discussed as his well-learned page-boy. Gradually it became clear that anything else would have been out of place. What was unfolding was an archetypal school play: the all-purpose, costume-hair "ephebeus" garments, the black drops, the scintillated eye, the aged young actors. What held the audience pinned to their chairs was surely the grim predictability, the utter consistency of everything worn and done and said in this two-hour-old charade. If Hamlet, or anyone else, had for a moment let slip the slightest hint of genuine feeling or attempted to struggle across the obvious suggestion of contrived meaning, the whole thing would have been endangered, might even have collapsed like a house of cards allowing us to laugh properly at the ridiculous component elements. Claudius (Charles Moody) looked and behaved like a cross between the postmodernist *Gertrude of Hamlet On Ice* and the King in the *Wizard of Id* — hilariously dressed in purple robes and a cardboard crown. Gertrude (Lucy Clifford) wrung from a touring company's *Know What* — the wicked queen in one of those two-borne "winkles" (dressed with a lot of expense) and a great big red necklace, the thought of such quasi-fuddy-duddy getting knotted up in the shorts together the Ghost (Ray Williams) whose melodramatic speech on "Remember me to my mother" as he exited was capped by his "Swear" from the wings which sounded as if he'd been kicked on the stomach rather suddenly, the parent-player king in his outrageous gilly wig.

I had some difficulty looking my companion in her seat as every blackhead she'd be on the edge of it, saying "Now?" When I could hold her no longer, we were wrong, looking up the scale, by the lights for interest.

I felt, as I say, command that it would be tedious to draw attention to the unconsciously prolonged death-throes of the Independent and to the remarkable survival of all that is worst in my memories of amateur Shakespeare (for schools in the life). The only change is that the audience I went to school with would have hoisted merely and made fine with it, thus, causing an impression "Shut up" speech by Hamlet and acrimony in assembly next morning. I guess it just shows that people expect less and less of theatre with every passing decade, a process steadily maintained by showing the worst things to the most impressionable.

By contrast the Actors' Company *"Naked"* *Hamlet* looks like the last word in novelty. Actually, the version dates

from 1968, the passage of time being perhaps most clearly discernable in the occasional *Man-ype* excursions into song-and-dance music (audience on the stage in the middle in this case instead of at the end like *Hamlet*). But the greatest, the significant contrast to the Independent's *Wanderer* was in the audience and its reaction: not school children compelled to the theatre and seated in their seats in well-defined categories, not even a chic or college audience, but normal-looking everyday young people and adults banded together for no other purpose, as far as I could see than the enjoyment of the play.

I suppose it could be said that the Naked *Wanderer* (it's something of a misnomer — they wear underclothes, Hamlet and Ophelia that is, for a couple of appearances) does little to extend or clarify our ideas of the play. It repeats entirely on the principle of ultra-maximum high-speed, intermittent shocks to one's preconceptions about the play. But the trick is that one is thinking about *Wanderer* even if thinking, for example, I'm sure there's more to the death of Ophelia than burying a peasant under a garbage-can lid; not just having a predictable and unthought, unlit stream of known old words launched at one from behind the arch. Of course, each section of the text as written can still seem fairly limited, all the more so, in fact, in their old new surroundings. And sometimes the surroundings were only to emphasize the meaning — as in the case of the sufficiency delivered by Hamlet in his Italian garden (the title, and

even (shades of Neuront's *Black Ady*) where what is added is in a sense of shocky symmetry in keeping with Hamlet's jake-playing character but at the expense of the intellectual content of the lines. Audience-participation (in its best at the end where Hamlet is the only one left alive and has to ask an audience-member to shoot him — a really very resonant moment), shaggy numbers, song-and-dance, and a general sense of knock-'em-down-and-drag-'em-out attack make this a vividly American *Wanderer* — showed how-how (but some pinch in the heart).

But tempting and easy as it is to apply prescriptive, classical criteria to this play, on the premise that any production of *Wanderer* must be aiming to give the final audience insight into the play, as if it were to be the last performance ever, it must be admitted that the premise is probably false. There is no reason why wit/ty/dieback games should not be played with the familiar old war-horse — even to at least partly serious purpose for the *Naked* *Wanderer* is not, really, a send-up (like *Wanderer On Ice*), rather a series of reflections on it is 1960-American-and-temporary show.

Peter de Sola gives a sweetly, passionately unapologetic commitment to the "true" role and thoroughly deserves the approval he wins from the audience. The production (Rodney Delaney) moves, as I have indicated in a short piece and makes what must be more than 90 minutes without an interval seem like just the right shape.

The company's starring *Rosencrantz*

and *Goldenshrone* are *Dead* is a respectable treatment of the play and putting it back-to-back with *Wanderer* is a good idea. Unfortunately, although consistency of roles is maintained (Peter de Sola also playing Hamlet) etc. in *Rosencrantz* and *Goldenshrone* — and Les Armstrong and Scott Lambert playing *Rosencrantz* and *Goldenshrone* in the *Wanderer*) the *Wanderer* from which the characters stray into *Rosencrantz* and *Goldenshrone* — is remarkably not the *Naked* *Wanderer* So, as in the Old Total's production of some years ago the Marston, *Citywide* etc. who appear in *Rosencrantz* and *Goldenshrone* are played as given (exaggeration is rather ridiculous conceives. I remember that, I worked, in reviewing the Old Total production that one could have a sense of an honest performance of *Wanderer* actually taking place just outside the off-stage hells in which *Rosencrantz* and *Goldenshrone* exist).

I was pleased to find that the play will come to me, as it did then, one of the best in the modern experience in the linguistic realm of dramaturgy in a moral, spiritual and even physical worldland (etched in the altogether original terms of a metaphor of moribund theatrical tradition, of pigs and word-games spending themselves in go-it-alone, or unparallelled in new English playwrighting I still long to see a production that plays the wildest game and doesn't over-kill the significant comedy, but it is good to see it revived and good to see an audience thoroughly enjoying it.

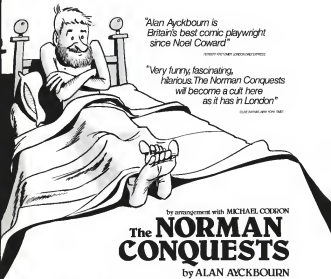
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PLAY B - August 12, 18, 19,
20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30,
30 September 10, 11, 26, 27,
28, 29, October 2, 5, 11, 12,
15, 20

PLAY C - August 21
September 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8,
9, 12, 13, 20, 21, 22, 23,
October 1, 10, 11, 12, 13, 21,
22, 24, 25

Playscript

MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE



HOW MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE CAME TO LIFE



'In all, we churned out the equivalent of four full-length plays'

As early as the winter of 1970, only two years after its beginnings, the Australian Performing Group in Melbourne established its reputation rapidly by deciding to make a play no special jelly. And then the company, a loose but flexible organisation dominated by individuals like Graham Barclay and Brian Dwyer, had been a crucible for the Australian playwright, a pot pourri of improvisational experiments, some serious, political indignation and artistic resistance — Off-Off-Broadway, Brecht and Grotowski all intermingling with the works of local writers, readers and writers.

The period from 1967 to 1978 at La Mama, where a plethora of groups and individuals worked, was indeed remarkably active, and not merely by contrast with the melancholic theatre of the earlier years — the Melbourne Theatre Company and Central Hall Theatre, for all their virtues, did not think or work out of an Australian context of experiment and aspiration. The rules at La Mama were simple, important, Australian, though paradoxically coloured by a modernist canonicity. In that sense it was never quite paradoxical. One style that did emerge, partly dictated by the small size of the space, was physical, direct, unadorned, tough, comic, yet strangely realist — no tricks of the trade, no hollow affectation. The APG, the main progenitor of this style, also introduced a dose of hetero-eroticism into the frequently apocryphal communist theatre of the time, a camp show but inevitably that still seems as unimpaired as time (complete as it today).

In Sydney, conservative little spots of Australian activity were under way, though nothing like the constant stream from La Mama. Jane Saxon Theatre mounted the Hellman farces of Roddy McDagall, did the odd Kennedy or Dorothy Hewitt, while Alex Boix backed out his first sociological satire. None of this, however, derived from a trained sense of what was wrong with Australian drama —

there were no calls, no groups, no debates, no philosophy, no word.

The APG has always been greeted with, to the extent that political and theatrical theory has occasionally coloured creative processes. Perfectionism, a theatre devoid of ideas is a barren and famous one. The APG, for all its reluctance to reach up, success consistently, has at least been more than dimly aware of issues crucial to the practice of theatre. This is in stark relief to a heap of the country's theatrical endeavour which tend to work empirically and desperately, so whose practitioners insist is a dirty word and whose ideas you could put down on half a Tally-ho cigarette paper.

Early on, then, a lot of matters were not automatically accepted by members of the APG. For example that the actor is naturally resourceful and staged (translating told out by a few of our senior actors over the years) that the director is invariably and inflexibly right, that the text is sacrosanct that theatre operates best within a hierarchical structure, that we are an English colony, that professional conduct is unduly strict, excellence, that formal training enables you to work flexibly and fluently, that Theatre is part of a Universal Conversation of which we are but a minor and fleeting link.

It is out of this empirical and humanist background that the best and the worst of the APG has evolved. The APG has not yet achieved its highest potential. Externally, the misadventures of time, the purchase of the status quo, have seen to that. Internally, it is a risk-taking self-reliant ensemble whose morale is extremely serious. Its failures relate to the question of ideological decorum to a naive and manipulative use of democratic procedure, to a kind of insular moral weakness, its weakness, and they are high in my new disillusioned opinion derive from the elevated, felt, thought-for discovery of an concerned and thinking artists and are inseparable from a unique working theatrical structure.

The APG is still a major intellectual and artistic reference point in Australian theatre, it's an innovative reference centre, some kind of island laboratory of ideas and

practice, from whose contorted takes some birds claim and status.

So, in 1970, while John Bell was working at Jane Saxon on a text by Rob Ellis and Michael Biddy (*The Legend of King O'Malley*), a two-year-old group of actors, directors and writers started open workshops with a view to developing a show based on shared content. As the workshops continued, new people were attracted of special importance was Margaret Williams, who suited up to the 1980s in Melbourne, to the Australian melodrama of the time and the work of David Hare, Caryl Churchill and Alfred Doolittle. Ideas like theatrical parallel were immediately discarded in terms of our own time. Research into the political and social history of that period revealed delicious analogies with contemporary Victoria.

In the autumn of 1970, the APG acquired the From Factory — significantly, around the corner from an broadcasting, La Mama Workshops and rehearsal room provided in what is now, known as the From Theatre. New blood appeared in the form of Max Gillies, Evelyn Kluge, Clare Dobson and Tony Taylor from the Bowmore Street studios of the Education Department. Bowmore Street, incidentally, was the heart of Corbin's famous lunatic path. The Bowmore they later retained, gave the circles of history, in *Marvellous Melbourne*.

Marvellous Melbourne The title was alternately, ironically, taken from one of the most popular melodramas of the late 19th century, we included in the production the Open Den Saxon from that excellent today.

Given the period, themes and basic style had been established, the writers, John Kennedy and I, dispatched ourselves to dine, concentrated in quiet detail, and wrote profusely — in all, we churned out the equivalent of four full-length plays over the whole period.

Scenes were then presented to the assembly, read or workshoped, and discussed. Some were rejected out of hand, others revised or accepted as written. It was a tedious and disconcerting process of trial and error. Generally, though advanced in a humorous fashion. The nec-

to some nature of the work did, however, at times lead to uneasy confrontation and personality clashes. Though mostly for the memory concerned, they were animated at the overall forward impetus to get the work at hand completed.

During rehearsals proper, especially before the second season, the two areas of actor independence and freedom emerged. This ideological difference became a little awkward for the writers to handle dramatically, as the material which had been primarily driven by sexual tension and enthusiasm, was not particularly amenable to formal development in these areas. It was difficult to come up with enough female roles and scenes for women; the villains of the time were all men, the troubled women of the time could largely only be deployed to shed a indirect ethical light on the behavior of the male power-players. Certainly, the great carnal and ecological thrust of some of my writing then offended a reconstructed sensibility at two.

On 11 December, the Prime Factory opened its doors to the public with the first season of *Marvellous Melbourne*. The show featured a cast of 15 and four scenarios led by the composer Lawrence

Melie. The performing area, roughly outlined with raised auxiliary areas, seemed populated by a renaissance of grotesque and balladine, early variety and middle-class vaudeville, political thugs and permanent hypocrites. The celebratory group-gangster style of performance owed an enormous amount to the early improvisational and non-verbal workshops. Moreover, it seemed to fit easily with the volatility of the text, perhaps the physical exorcism linked hands lovingly with the verbal exorcism.

After a projected eight performances, the group settled back to re-work the material, combine and gel disparate themes, to elaborate new scenes, to refine performances, and explore the whole again dramatically. This it did over the summer. The final version of *Marvellous Melbourne* appeared in March 1971 and played to houses of a size equalled at the Prime Factory only a few times since. So large were audiences that the Health Department eventually felt compelled to close the place down.

Marvellous Melbourne, a 1968 Melbourne phenomenon, did not escape the continual exclusion of *The Legends of*

King O'Malley. As has been pointed out by Katherine Brinkman, a lot of comparable historical significance. Remnants of *Marvellous Melbourne* still ring strongly through the APM, manifested in the free-thinking flexibility and physicality of many of its best actors, and the durable tradition of group-oriented plays. A strongly threaded one also be traced through *The Secret Man* and *High Show: The Feet of Daniel Mann* and *Walrus Melville: Mary Shelley and The Monster*, *The Les Darcy Show*, *The Floating World* and *A Feast to Melba*.

This text (of the final version) is presented as a historical document, no attempt at revision or emendation has been made. As surely, there are some things all of us concerned would like to change, but that would be a literary task, the wisdom of hindsight. The *age of Marvellous Melbourne* is difficult to detach from the performance it helped engender, from the actors and directors who worked for its freedom, it is a little like a distributed voice. Full appreciation of *Marvellous Melbourne* belongs to the memory of those who saw and relished its bawdiness, vulgarity, sexual initial energy, and anti-establishment political nature.



MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE [PART 1]

In the original production
ACTORS

Graeme Blandell, Ray Brown, Michael Christie, Meg Clancy, Desmonde Culveridge, Lady Davies, Clara Dobson, Kerry Dwyer, Bill Garner, Max Gilks, Evelyn Krieger, Wilfred Linn, Yvonne Morris, Rod Moore, Terry Taylor

DIRECTORS

Graeme Blandell, Max Gilks

WRITERS

Jack Hubbard, John Ramond

COMPOSER

Lorraine Milne

LIGHTS

Gaiff Milne, Jack Campbell

DESIGN

Chris Berkman, Jack Campbell, Garth Brown

Colonies. We have cognac from France, sandalwood and myrrh from Mesopotamia, incense from the Congo, an elephant from Tibet. We have a locomotive from Hamburg, a telegraph from Serbia, a regiment of Cossacks and a crew of Yelga boatmen, with boats, who tomorrow, undoubtedly, will sail up our beautiful Yarra from Sandridge to Kew Gardens, where they will sing in the Court's temple for those taking tea on the grass.

The Government of Victoria, ladies and gentlemen, has spared nothing to ensure the success of this celebration. They have been lavish. What a spectacle! The holiday spent in a shared night and day there are concerts, luncheons and parties. Do not fail to view, at my own personal recommendation, the unique collection of European pictures, the new Enfield rifles, the latest Gatling, the seven-floor engine from Madagascar and his wife, a pygmy from Caylon. Do not fail to enjoy yourselves, to celebrate this high tide in Melbourne's history!

The crowd led by the MC, move around a light, admiring the view of Melbourne from the rooftop, then descend again.

MC: In a few moments we have the honor and pleasure to welcome to our humble midst the Duke and Duchess of

York, who have generously allowed the Imperial Exhibition of half the world to attend our exhibition beneath strange southern skies. Give them a cordial colonial welcome, ladies and gentlemen. Square not your hands near their feet.

In attendance with them will be the Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Loch, the Mayor and Mayors of Melbourne and other political dignitaries.

Here they are, ladies and gentlemen, show your appreciation, show the spirit of the times, the wealth and progress, the generosity of magistrates, marvellous Melbourne!

Arrival of Duke of York et al

MC: His Lordship, the Mayor of Melbourne

Mayor: Ladies and gentlemen

Mayor and dissent

MC: So ladies please!

Mayor: Ladies and gentlemen I think I can say with the pride of no house man that tonight is a landmark in the history of Melbourne, it is the summit of our endeavour, our very Kosciusko. To stand on this summit, with his wife, we have here tonight, is personal representative of her Majesty, the Queen, Her Most Excellent Grace the Duke of York.

Never has Melbourne known such industry, wealth and expansion. Our Stock Exchange rises at the millions with income and profit. Grand new edifices sprout each day. Papyrus and obelisks adorn our streets. Ours is a wealthy, healthy, just and powerful city. Its citizens are content, even asked to a word, Melbourne is on the map.

To share in this glory, indeed to witness it, we have here tonight the Duke and Duchess of York.

It is my great pleasure and honorable task, then, to introduce to you our guests and guests, or, couple, and welcome them, as demonstratively elected representatives of the people, to our great Centennial International Exhibition. (Applause)

EXHIBITION SCENE: 1888

The Master of Ceremonies stands in the middle of a merry and curious crowd.
MC: Ladies and gentlemen, I am Mortimer Patonik, your Master of Ceremonies. It is my duty and honor to welcome you all to Melbourne's splendid and majestic Exhibition Buildings, to part company in the Centennial International Exhibition.

In these vast buildings, thirty nine acres, ladies and gentlemen, we proudly house 30,000 exhibitions from sixty-three countries, not including the Australian



DR. K.E. Thank you. Thank you. I feel Mayan. Government, ancient politicians and even themselves, leaders and gentlemen.

My wife and I are quite disappointed by this splendid welcome. We hardly feel equal to the occasion, such is no pleasure and/or, both.

To travel such vast and barbaric distances, to desert our dear England, the smallest of nations, for some time months in the colonies was not a minor undertaking. We felt, however, that it was our Duty, and Duty is something by which we are off. Duty is God, Queen and Country.

On behalf of her Majesty, who this very month is taking the waters at Baden-Baden, we duty thank the Lord Mayor for his eloquent and well-kept sentences. We are quite determined to enjoy ourselves, to celebrate with you the celebration. We are very firmly determined to explore classically the burgeoning little colony, and even prepared to meet some of the, er, people. Thank you.

MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE SONG

This is Melbourne's moment of glory.

Let joy and laughter bubble out.

This is our own success story.

Our future is assured without doubt.

Melbourne, Melbourne, marvellous city of the south,

Full of parks and gardens without a single flower.

Gay with poets and yachting at the Yarra's mouth,

A haven for the rich, paradise for the poor.

This is Melbourne's vice.

Melbourne, Melbourne, another London on the south,

A huge and gleaming nugget in the Empire's crown,

A city where every citizen is a figure, is proud to promenade in sun and gown.

This is Melbourne's vice.

Melbourne, Melbourne, is absolutely on the map,

Her years of expansion know no human limit,

Her women are elegant, her men full of zip.

If there is a Heaven, then this is surely it.

This is Melbourne's vice.

Melbourne, Melbourne, secure in Mother Nature's lap,

The very centre of a new Pacific power.

We'll re-plant Old England's southern map.

This city is Melbourne's most marvellous hour.

This is Melbourne's vice.

Pink and blue water and my

Pink and Blue!

The impossible is possible for Mothers Best and Fair.

We will fit you up for a percentage,

We can make you greedy-greedy Salvo-reflexion tank,

We throw splendid charts across the ladies swimming.

We've got Melbourne on a string,

We've got Melbourne in our pocket.

We've got Melbourne on a string,

We can do anything and everything.

Talk about Melbourne, we've got it.

SANDRIDGE

Snowy: They've got Melbourne on a string all right, only the string's a bloody rope and it's snapping the lot of us.

Stamp: The Frogs had the right idea,

pulling the birds.

Jack: I wouldn't mind one of their heads on an emu's tail.

Dingo: Inside the bow of the Queen.

Stamp: The royal soldiers.

Snowy: Listen to this, while on the subject of legends and myths. *(He produces a piece of paper.)* I was strong enough to arrest a few quid in Marnie's local. *(Enter Bank in 1887.)*

Stamp: Found the prospectus in the door's last night. *(Copies it.)* "This bank is founded for the purpose of smothering the industrial and thereby classes on participate in the distribution of real estate, or secure a portion of the large profits which are made by purchasing land in large quantities and selling the same in moderate-sized farms or allotments."

Stamp: *(Examining an appropriate speech for advice.)* How is the country estate still cheap?

Snowy: Thirty?

Jack: Poor women of late, eh?

Snowy: A more ice in the case.

Dingo: The thing?

Snowy: A little better, Dargwell. Had a spot of trouble with the showers, backed the hostess and employed sub-machine.

The countryside is alive with them. Hardly a cross. The women have retreated clutching their scented coats. They'll now have the audacity to try that again.

Stamp: Well done, Snowdon!

Jack: It's a pity that most of your harvest has to go to the museum.

Snowy: Not true. I export the best and leave the dirt here.

Stamp: Well done, Snowdon!

Dingo: I believe that the working classes

grow more stunted every year.

Snowy: Spill out, Dargwell! Don't naturally to poor fodder, the virtual of sheep here, in-breeding, cancer, casualised population, paid-pooling and other filthy postures.

Stamp: Marnie was a dwarf!

Snowy: Drowned in his own pink pee.

(He utters a laugh.) Sleep peacefully.

SONG OF EIGHTEEN-NINETY

Conditions in the city aren't what they ought to be.

The sharks and bloody Boomer control economy.

They milk money from the wealthy and squeeze the poor as well.

It is Heaven for the leeches, but fat is its nearly Hell.

In August eighteen-ninety we joined the women's strike.

And kidnapped all employees, the big and small alike.

Then the unemployment heat us, non-constructs and scales.

Like poor men they saved the boxes in carts and heavens said.

Conditions, friends! I tell you, aren't what they used to be.

We've built inside the weaving of industrial-crept.

With low wages and the price of materials at a peak.

It is such to have a beer, the rent men as it is each week.

Fly: It looks like a bulging book to me. **Raggy:** Does it? That ship said a good lot to open its hatch.

Fly: A colonial fork?

Libby: Let's go, Nigel. I want to show you the city and my father's theatre, where I do a spot of acting myself.

Nigel: Really? **Opalita?**

Libby: Menstrual in distress.

Nigel: Could I be your soufflé lover?

Libby: Are you suited to the part?

Nigel: If you want a maiden, you

Libby: I am.

Nigel: Bye-bye, Raggy.

Libby: *(To Nigel.)* *(Don't tell Raggy, but I think they've played him for a New Chum.)*

Nigel: What?

(Then exit, leaving Raggy.)

Raggy: Yes. Have a nice time. *(Sighs.)* What about me? Where's my Mrs Little Raggy, eh? Nothing doing. A lot of gold steel and the laugh-off.

SONG OF THE NEW CHUM TAKEN FOR A RIDE

Raggy: *(Sings.)* *(Main character through the power spectrum of well. He does not seem to be a chum.)*

(Left in a house and waiting on Station Pier For a rough, tough warlike missing his book.)



—HAROLD GILBERT—

to reappear
O dear God, I'm such a sard!
Why does it always happen this way?
I hardly fail for any trick that anyone likes
to play

There was that time back home when some
used asked me to hold this lot of string
well, I did. I wasn't doing anything else.
That's one use it? Hold that, knock the
bags — all very obliging? Well, after four
hours, the other chap — I'd never seen
him before — he comes around the corner
and it seems odd to be on the other end you
see. And he says

Sarge
Have you been holding this piece of string
like I have?

Have you been standing there not doing a
thing like I have?

Jeans, we're sads! What a pair of chaps
For waiting half the day — eh?
That bastard asked me to be a fan or else
go pass by lady — a bit?

That's me — sentenced, everywhere I go
When about the time this bloke asked me
to pass for a photo with his girlfriend! All
right, yes, yes, guggle, guggle — she's a lot
of all right, you're a lucky man Bang! Two
days pass. Next thing there I am on a
"wanted" paper outside the police station.
"This man wanted in connection with the
disappearance of Ellen E. McAvoy".
They've played and played it on me
Jeans! And on top of it all, my old man
says to me

Sarge
Listen, Reggie, listen to me. You're
something of a failure.
It's plain to see the place for you is what's
known as Australia.

"That was because through" — this is my
father talking now — "because through
your valiant efforts, Reggie the family
grocery store has been brought to the edge
of bankruptcy." "Oh, it has, has it?" I said.
"Is that good?" It wasn't of course and
here I am, two hours in the land of opportunity,
and I've given the opportunity of
building this luteh-apper and I've made a
grand "Haie," he says, "hold that and
we say that dead over there all right or I'll
push you in the mouth." "Well, yes,
certainly I will!" I mean, wouldn't you?
Yes, Sirs (Please) I mean, wouldn't you?
What is it he says? Yes, what is it? He
turns to his workman then and says,
"This Poring bastard wants to know what
this is for." He grabbed my hand with the
whole thing in it. "It's for opening
my lunch, mate, and money runs as I
don't appreciate — Porse, for example."
"Which shed did you say?" I said and so
here I am

Sarge
Left to my own devices on Station Pier,
Waiting for a wharfie moving a hook to
reappear

I've begun to think it's a trick,
That usually what happens to me.
I'm weak and obliging, a sally sard, a
new chum all in all

Applies up Reggie is at wool-bale Coop
and Co. returning. Make stops

Reggie: Oh, there's my friend now. You-
too? Hi! I began to think you weren't
coming back. Hihi!

Coop: There you are. Take a look

Reggie: I imagined you'd forgotten me,
thought you were going to take me for a
ride in they say. Hihi!

Coop: Hook in hand, just waiting for the
anti-work signal (Guggle Reggie) Well,
aren't you ch? Scrubbing about to
load this Maize-buried bale, eh? I got your
game, don't you worry. (Halt Reggie go-
ing over to make a break for it. The hand
pail caught in hole and pulls him back. He
shouts I think so let go! Take some of this
man, taste good bloody note. This is what
we're up against. Say something, you
Reggie! Oh, ooh! (Struggling to get
away. Hihi! Hihi!)

Coop: Hear a? Feeney. Plans in day
Jeans: They're flooding the market-
place with foreign labour, swamping the
market, undermining our ability to
bargain collectively. No doubt about it.
Who hired you, Seamus? (The Reggie
has gone. I hit by the dirty little boulder!)
Coop and Co. go there. Laphadus
Chairman)



LARRIKINS AND SADDLING- PADDOCK SCENE

Flonagston Racecourse. Cup Day. On the
flat

Silk: Eh, Ramon, you clapped on on the
King?

Ramon: Na, am I worked me for a stretch

Silk: "Ere, you've got me on yer think

Ram: Copping in, shorned. Strike me fat.

Silk: the Flonagston mad muck look she

Silk: Wacha back?

Ram: Carbons, o'course. Half-a-yard
Tells (gug-mug): I want the quid for five
Rams! What a spealer!

King (yawning): Ere, you cabbins want me
donah?

Ram: The traps 'ave jugged 'et, King

King: Don't get pakey brish at me

Silk: Wacha back, King?

King: Carbons. A flag for me

Silk: Corrine blue, a brick!

King: I'll do the bagpinner square in the

quart with it

Ram: You're all right, King

King: Nuff it, Ram, or I'll knockle yer

quart

Ram: (yawning) Right. Corne, lie so pakey as a

grass-cut

Silk: Ah, "ere comes yer little piece

a muckin, King

Ram: The bushfire blonde

Silk: Princess of the pavement

Gugger enters

King (yawning): Where's yer horse, Gugger?

Gugger: Goodness the grade

King: Ower e on the ditches!

Gugger: Oh?

King: "Oh, she says. What a tag!

Gugger: Don't call me a tag

King: Why not?

Gugger: I'm yer bloke

Ram: Pass in the job, King

King: puncher Gugger

Silk: What a finger!

King (yawn)

They call me King Flash,

King of the Bousse-ron,

The meridian, Carbons Park,

I make the Melbourne route

He is used for me clothes,

Mr Monahan and Mr Ramon (yawning
to him)

Not many will me colder

Minus a pluggish man (thence a punch)

Clavies. Tins, Quango and Samson enter

Tins: Eh, the muck 'ave started?

Quango: Corne, Ramon

Samson (to King, slowly): I spread a whole

carpet on the Silly from Echam with the

luteh colours —

King (yawning, Samson aside): Corne, yer

luteh, in the tails!

They force their way to the road through a

street crowd with comments like: "Oh

de way. Tingle. Strive me, Strive me!"

"Make way for the Bousse-ron!" "Don't

cut the flash with me, jam force. They

reach the rails

Gugger: There, there is at the straight!

Ram: Carbons at the head?

Ram: Yes, Carbons?

All: Corne, Carbons! Eh

Samson: Ere, where's that good from

Echam?

All: Carbons was!

Clavies yells out

Quango: What a muck!

King: I was it

Silk: All that you're. What a push of

backed. A new set of clothes for Silk

tomorra

Tins: Wo about me?

Ram: Shouldn't put a blackcut on 'em

Samson (yawning): She just crossed the line

Flonagston Race. Ladies and

gentlemen, official placings are now at hand for the 1990 Melbourne Cup. First place goes to the colt *Carbone* by Mares and Money, winning in the record time of three minutes 28.9 seconds.

All: Let's hear it!

Carbone earned a record-winning weight of 10 stone five pounds. Second place — we show and *Charm* and *Coast* took it in a good!

King: Eric Smeaton (Tossing down a shilling), there's a Marstonian with the measure!

There goes Smeaton! There he lies!

Smeaton (gloriously): I did not expect. No check for a week!

King: Eh, yer larks, I'm dead for a gulp of the cups.

Coop: Oo, I'll lose a squint!

Mare: Where on, Flack?

Smeat: The old Snatching Paddock!

All: Yeh!

King: Let's set it, Brewster. Set points at the Royal Summit.

Smeat: Yeh.

There comes an old Snatching Paddock!

Collect by a fair Marston

Barnum: What'll it be, gentlemen?

Ginger: A society's job.

Quango: O! It's a lady's want.

Tux: Lola Monroe, are

King: There's wrong larks, Marston.

Barnum: Right with you, King.

King: She's a yam! Yeh, Mori.

Barnum: Never touch a, Squae.

King: Yer lag.

Angel and *Cal* never remain only.

Silk: Lark, a couple of Trills.

Mare: Goo! Are they out of the path?

Ginger: Boobs 'or indignation ain't never been played!

Mare: I'd give her a long tug.

Quango: You keep 'em 'er!

Silk: Owe yer tugging lark, Marston!

Stamp: Jesus, I could date one down right now, only the old woman would square a lot of me with her mangle.

Jack: How's your wife, Dango?

Dango: She died.

Jack: Sorry to hear that, mate.

Smeat: What from, Dango?

Dango: Malnutrition according to Saw Boats. She gave all the babies to the kids I didn't know.

Jack: It's getting worse every day.

Smeat: And what's the Government doing?

Dango: Nothing.

Jack: Not a damn thing.

Dango: They sit up there on their fat asses while we're sweating for a crust.

Coop (interrogating): What are you all whinging about? You're getting job haven't you?

Smeat: Yeh, but what for?

All: For a shilling in pay!

The sweat runs down our backs in rivers. The heat and it's burning you the skin and shivers.

Our muscles ache, backs are permanently bent,

Our guts are full of maggots, our heads of rotting.

Our sons and children eat bread-and-water slops;

There's lugging hell in the corner shops. There's nothing but work, work, work,

work,

And big, big money for the boss, the big fat Turk.

We'll hit, leave and pull the whole bloody day for a miserable rotten shilling in pay.

We'll hit, leave and pull the whole bloody day.

For a miserable rotten shilling in pay. We'll hit, to death of work and sweating.

Work much rather be in a tea-shop hitting. Grunting on the Yarns with a hook and line.

Grunting flaps of the best, Barndon wine.

Our wives and children should be dressed in the best.

When it snows howler hat and white silk coat! Not here but on our boss or silver pants.

New Chair.

We're the magi, the rotten bloody scene! We'll hit, leave and pull the whole bloody day.

For a miserable rotten shilling in pay!

Smeat: What can we do for you, Coop?

Coop: Uncle feel gentlemen are due back. We can't afford it.

Coop: There's no such thing as 'Can't afford'!

Stamp: You've got a bit to learn.

Dango: I can afford it.

Coop: That's more like it, lugs.

Dango: My wife just died. One less mouth to feed.

Coop: My condolences.

Stamp: You have to understand our position, Coop.

Coop: Marston. You have to understand our loss. We must present a consolidated front to the employers who bleed us dry by —

Flack (interrogating with authority): Gentlemen! Gentlemen of Sandridge! May I present to you Mr Nigel Now-Dango, director of the newly arrived Drury Lane Shakespeare Company, here to entertain and edify us, to add to the greater glory of Melbourne!

Stamp: There's not too much glory in Melbourne at the moment, mate!

Flack: At my personal request, I must request, Nigel has graciously agreed to entertain and educate you with a modest portion of the Bard.

Smeat: What?

Jack: It's a hand-out.

Nigel: Ladies of the theatre, patrons of the gods, colonial waterfolk! Our expedition across prodigious and perilous oceans to your colony (yes, it appears to me, be it noted) is that of the Ancient Greeks some millennium ago.

Stamp: What's he talking about?

Jack: Do you get paid for that?

Coop: Aye, in you a minute!

Nigel: Indeed, this harbour, the vast polished sky, the supple water, are all collages of noble grace! I am reminded vividly of my water on South Kemlands. I mean Mylones, with Sarah in a phrase — Dango (overcome): Get on with it!

Stamp: Stop the water!

Coop: Back labour!

Romeo: He puts it so, that never felt a sound! (Picks up water) But soft, what light through yonder window breaks, are

Juliet: Aye, mate!

Romeo: O speak again bright angel, for thou art —

Juliet: O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?

Smeat: Here's docked at Sandridge, lugs. Stamp (interrogating): WHAT SLOP?

Jack: MISS OFF, TOFF!

Coop: Cal him, mate, be on the employ of 'at Park' (Lifting them on their refuse etc.) It's a squandering of public money, our money, Dango, money we need.

Romeo: refuse of Dango. Park is (for sh-prrt) Nigel stands his ground, dodging the matter.

Nigel: Desist you unscrupulous and ill-bred colonial politicians! We have not come here to suffer horrendous attack but to bring to you direct from London the historical communications of William Shakespeare — Nigel is shocked and

constrained by a moment!

Coop: Who knows that moment?

Stamp: I did.

Coop: Give water! Water!

Romeo: Some water.

Coop: What brings you here?

Romeo: A hatred of steady theoretical (superficial), and a desire to help you out, Marston.

Coop: Mr Brown, man is a bodybody, a child in our affairs, as (interrogating), a writer, a playwright. Just take a look at his hands (Typing in ink half of Romeo's death) (Shit, gule and gulate).

Brown: You're not a steady rough, Coop.

Coop: Never since a day's hard work. Therefore, it is obvious, have no love for toil and the loss of us working men. They have come to work before Parliament, to apply frequently at Lyndale who is so much and give fat on events and unscrupulous!

Romeo: You don't look particularly unscrupulous, Coop.

Coop: All workers must resist an automata. We must unite in strength or else our advance in Koratkin. The unemployed far wages for far hours for far work. Such labour will not be tolerated. Such must be strangled off the capitalist corpse.

Romeo: I'm a work.

Coop: Get him, men!

There's Romeo Brown.

Romeo: Desist you unscrupulous and ill-bred colonial politicians! (Laughter) Gentlemen.

Mr Marston Coop here speaks with a forked tongue. Workers are workers, whether automata or non-automata. The automata in the colony are a select domain for the non-automata.

Coop: A lot!

SONG OF THE WHARFIES

We'll hit, leave and pull the whole bloody day.

For a miserable rotten shilling in pay.

Fison: Their windows are only open to the subject. Their form are unobtrusive. They are the voices and banners of the noblest qualities of England, they are the joy and gentleness in our strong red blood. They must be reformed.

Comp: A, I believe! A foul lot! Right before you, men, stands a true scab, the type who would work for less when you strike and starve, a non-sensical thing. Furthermore, fellow workers, this particular scab has a yellow wrist, a certain Clara Mangelsen has. He is a very precise knowledge, a friend and mentor of our Chemical laborers, those mongrelized and swartwingered scoundrels who daily threaten our livelihood, welfare and infect our children. Oh, carry and denigrate the god of lechery, opium, excitement and cheap labor! (Pause) Gentlemen, men? They had refuse on faces.

Fison: Gentlemen! The very vegetation and fruit you had are grown by the Chinese (Pause) They are fellow-workers. Every day you eat the fruit of their labor! How many of you are out of work because of them? None. All workers must unite. Mr Comp looks at you shaking of his. He is a snake in the grass, an octopus with long nervous tentacles and a magnet of wit. I propose minimum less entry to all workers and negotiations with employers and governments on behalf of all workers! Swear behind a whistle. *Pause.*

Sams: Ladies are, a's handsome than about we pack down to the pub and the ale a cut over a few coppers?

Jack: Good idea. I'm confused.

Comp: But you can't afford it.

Sams: It's your about money-bags.

Comp: I suggest you wouldn't dign to join us then?

Fison: Anything for a beer here.

Alfred enters. Nigel appears cornered.

Douglas enters.

Nigel: Let Home in later with us.

What speed tonight?

Douglas: Hands off. We wait in Choir.

Widdowson.

Nigel: Who are you?

Douglas: Alfred.

Nigel: *delightfully.* Lord Douglas. What a

upstart!

Douglas: Alfred Douglas, an Actor.

Producer. Playwright. Theatrical

manager. Manager of the Theatre Royal.

Nigel: How tedious?

Douglas: You I gather, are Mr Nigel.

New Cherry?

Nigel: Correct.

Douglas: What on earth prompted you to come here? Bad weather in London?

Secunditate production? Blacks on the

poor?

Nigel: Not at all. It was a desire to ac-

quaint the natives with C. Lancelotti's

Douglas.

Nigel: Lucy?

Douglas: Anyway, maybe, as already been

done.

Nigel: By whom?

Douglas: By me.

Nigel: What scenery?

Douglas: It is a new affair.

Nigel: Precisely. That's why we call it *Douglas*. You might as well paddle straight back.

Nigel: Lucy?

Douglas: The people are not interested in sport.

Nigel: But we are not interested in the people.

Fison: *(sotto-voce).* All the more reason to depart.

Nigel: Indeed. And to night you be?

Fison: Laura-Evith.

Nigel: A. Press-on.

Douglas: From Cohag.

Fison: What is a matter where I come from?

Nigel: One's parents is one's progeny.

Fison: You were descended from a bar-

baron.

Nigel: How dare you?

Fison: Don't lecture me. Read *Darius*.

Douglas: What has *Darius* got to do with the theatre?

Fison: Quite a lot. For theatre to survive and meet spending it must be the case of pre-existing conditions. Not an unexamined saddle.

Nigel: Shakespeare is a unexamined saddle?

Fison: To the people of Melbourne, yes.

Nigel: Damn! Be people of Melbourne?

Fison: *(Dumbly).*

Nigel: *(Gives out)* *Douglas.*

Douglas: What connection with the theatre have you, Mr Fison, that you should trouble Mr New Cherry, a successful student of the art?

Fison: Not much. But I intend to. All I shall write plays that depict the lives of Melbourneans as they really are. I shall people the stage with my own people, and ignore all reported myths and England's madhouse exports. I shall write as a Murray and Carlton fan. I shall have Melbourne men sing and suffer, dance and die, as well as any Athenians or Londoners, and yet not dabble in mere local colour. *Exit a Mr Douglas.*

We leave.

Nigel: What presumption?

Douglas: *(to himself).* He could be on to something here.

Nigel: When —

Reggie: *(hearing).* Where do you want the boys to?

Nigel: Anywhere, somewhere.

Reggie: I'm doing a load of trouble with the *Don't Backlash*.

Douglas: Come a into the bay, son.

Nigel: Ladies. Reggie, be a sweet and run along.

Reggie: What about Fobell's suit of arms?

Nigel: Run along!

Reggie: *(hearing).* Oo, it isn't off rough, a lot of my dimensions. Run along, a says, with all a size of bleeding mind on the back.

Nigel: Where were we?

Douglas: I suggest you forget Shakespeare and join me in my venture at the Theatre Royal. You could blend very well into my latest production, *Marvellous Melbourne*, due to open soon and take the city by storm. Besides — here are a pair of — the wardrobe is rather alluring.

Nigel: How much?

Douglas: Possibly a minute.

Nigel: When do we start?

Douglas: Tomorrow.

Nigel: Excellent. Pay about my Hamlet though. As mad as Mandrake.

Douglas: I was once a very fine Claudius. How long are you in Hamlet?

Nigel: Excellent, a' faith, of the character's dike, I can the art, promise-covered, you control food capers to

Douglas: Talking of capers, here comes

Car trade and her gaggle.

Female chatter. Mrs Douglas and Lily enter. Mrs D. is tough and raucous.

Mrs D.: Alfred!

Douglas: Yes, Fred.

Mrs D.: You're upstart as far hours. Do you know what the time is?



MISS FANNY REID as "JULIET."

Charles: In this game anything like ten or poker — because I don't play five or poker.

Robert: No, no, the significant thing in the world, explain it to him. Hang-Hi!

Hang-Hi: You also, same make the mark, you sober?

Charles: You sober? — what's "you sober"?

Robert: "You understood?"

Charles: I don't sober.

Hang-Hi: You make plenty mark, also same, also finger (Shows finger.) You sober. Yet you also see open book in, put open shop. Barker makes mark, also same. You make plenty money mark, also same. Four mark (Shows four fingers.) No good. Five mark (Shows five.) Lily good. Seven mark (Shows seven.) Better good. Eight mark (Shows eight.) Plentiful good. Nine mark, much better, also same. Another plenty money, you sober?

Charles makes index.

Jack: What do you think of it, Charles?

Charles: I see I think is all. He's made my head ache. The hotel itself seems to get thicker and thicker, denser I know.

Robert: Nonsense. You'll soon get used to it.

Charles: Does all Melbourne smell like that?

Robert: Sometimes.

Charles: Perhaps that's why Sala called it Marvellous Melbourne.

Robert: You shall have a treat tomorrow. We will take you down to the horse-baiting works on the lovely Yarra.

Charles: If I stay here much longer I shall be ill tomorrow, doncher know. (Marks index.)

Robert: You certainly will not if you go out on the streets at this time of night.

Jack: It's quite right; it's dangerous. There are some very rough customers about.

Hang-Hi marks duplicate index (C)

Jack: You ask someone Noman, he'll show you men in Little Bourke Street who would crack a joke, a crib, or your head like making.

Charles: Oh, Bushwangers. They must be terrible fellows, Bushwangers. I read in the papers some time ago that it took all the Melbourne police force and a big cannon to capture three of them.

Hang-Hi: Holding out index? Must Charles make more.

Charles: Terrible fellows, Bushwangers, but I'm prepared for them.

Country to take strike. He puts out revolver and points it at Hang-Hi, who looks behind counter holding up index.

Robert: A revolver?

Charles: Yes, a British Bulldog.

Robert: (Index?) We must secure that.

Jack: Leave the fool his toy. It won't interfere with our work.

Robert: Now give us the opium paper.

Hang-Hi: You smoke pipe — all right?

See Hang-Hi.

Robert: (Index to Jack?) Did you bring that flask of drugged brandy?

Jack: Here you get the square one?

Robert: (producing flask, drink?) Yes.

Charles: (You must be thirsty, Charles.)

Charles: I feel quite full with the stuff. I think I could drink a glass of better beer.

Jack: Here have a nip of brandy (Offering flask.)

Charles: (drink?) By Jove! The brandy is just like the stuff!

Enter Hang-Hi with opium lamp etc.

Robert: (Index?) Now for the pipe and he's as good as dead for a couple of hours.

(Hand to Charles.) Take a whiff of the pipe just by way of experiment, it will be something to tell your mother when you get back to the Old Country that you smoked a Chinese opium pipe.

Charles: No thank you. I don't mind a cigarette, but I don't smoke a pipe.

Robert: Nonsense? What? You, an Englishman who has been under fire in the Sudan?

Hang-Hi motions Charles to sit down on mattress. Hang-Hi prepares opium with lamp between them, pipe opium in pipe.

Charles draws and becomes stupefied.

Hang-Hi: You lie down at my. Me lie down at my. (Lies down alongside Charles.)

Charles: I feel as if I were drunk.

Jack: You're as sober as a number of performers.

Charles: That brandy must be very strong.

Robert: There it is, my boy.

Charles: Somebody's put me to bed with my boots on. Good night, however, Mother.

(To Hang-Hi.) If you're waiting, call me early, call me early, Mother dear, for I'm to be Queen of the May.

Robert: I'm to be Queen of the May.

Charles falls back asleep.

Jack (who, with Robert, is leaning against the counter): We've got him!

Robert: Now for his letter of credit.

(Moving down by Charles.) He's one of the biggest cases we've had.

Jack: By all the saints of Collyerwood, he is a soft one!

Robert rises for papers, then a card-case to Jack and goes on as Jack reads it.

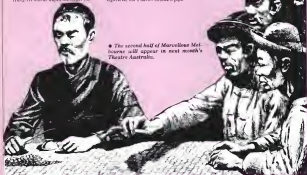
Jack: Charles Harold Vane Somers, Chevalier of the Virtue Goughly, the Duke of York.

Jack and Robert double-look.

Together: The Duke of York!

Curran

■ The second half of Marvellous Melbourne will appear in next month's Theatre Australia.





The QTC achieves a significant break-through

GENESIS

DON BACHELOR

Genesis Queensland Theatre Company — Darling Downs Youth Theatre Queensland Touring Troupes, Darling Downs Province, 25 June 1977

With Shane Culshaw, Denise Carr, Peter Clary, Cyle Collins, Martin Hine, Barry Ingham, James Jackson, Leo James, Tom Rogers, Jacqueline Tate, Mark Lisle, Helen McMorris, Michelle Molloy, Chris Viner, Susan Wilkinson, Steve-Pillsa, Steven John White, Ian Wilson, John Turner, Lee Zeller.

Genesis is perhaps the most significant single project yet undertaken by the Queensland Theatre Company. One could identify self-indulgence in the text, flabbianness in the production, excessive feelings in the design and many indications of performance which would obstruct the transmission and imagination of the concept. But the largeness of the attempt is of such importance that I am not going to risk being in a detailed catalogue of failures of execution.

At any time, the project represents the QTC's most complete attempt to meet and work with the community, and is the most important break-through yet in finding a way to serve the country areas of Queensland — so far, a singularly unrespected requirement of the company's charter.

Four professional theatre people, Robert Kingham (director), Lloyd Nelson (designer), Ann Coker (musical director), and Rick Thompson (administrative) were set up, for a period of four months, in a rambling house in Toowoomba, 100 miles west of Brisbane. The house was the only focus for activities, and finally performances which ranged over the Darling Downs, an agricultural region of quite specific geographic and demographic identity, "half the size of Tasmania". More than 40 participants were recruited from 15 high schools in the region and proceeded to meet in groups for acting, writing, design, music, drawing, and technical matters, sometimes

separately, sometimes together, sometimes in Toowoomba, sometimes in other districts, after school, at night, and at weekends. Several camps were held as part of the process of growing together. This co-operative effort with people from the same district where you might otherwise meet only in competitive situations like sport or debates, strikes me as one of the healthier aspects of the project. For working purposes, the group took on the name Darling Downs Youth Theatre, and it will be interesting to see whether the achievement of the professional status of students (not to let the idea die when they leave) are backed by the community. An apparent weakness, now, in the set-up, was the failure to include any local adults in the team who might carry on the work.

I spent a weekend in Toowoomba early in the project and saw the way in which various groups would come and go at the house, making it almost impossible to see or hear of their members — an impression now going on in one room, a stage-light being switched on in the limo, a group "wining" out on the back steps, and others from the design team experimenting with corn-cobs in ways William Faulkner never thought of. Developing this and maintaining a sense of responsibility between groups, so that both project and team grew organically, were interesting features of the exercise.

The Downs community was generous in its involvement. Shops donated food, the media gave time and space, a local bus company provided transport, all of which is significant only because it was part of a deliberate policy to include local people as much as possible. In the same spirit, lots of local produce and materials were used in the show itself — onions, corn leaves and husks and were incorporated in the costumes, and some ploughshares were transferred into musical instruments.

The show itself was a group creation based on the Book of Genesis and the Babylonian myth of Gilgamesh, *Enkidu* and "Nink", which pre-dates Genesis by 4000 years. These superbly elemental stories will stirred power, in this simple, direct, episodic portrayal, to convey the mystic sense of life, and the ritual shape of birth, life, death and regeneration which are the underpinnings of drama. In our contemporary theatre, so preoccupied with the sexual adjustment of men, it is deeply refreshing to meet total man, as life is lived, in death. If the QTC wanted to revolutionise young people to theatre, I am chock of no better material with which to do so.

The highlights of the evening was the action devoted to the epic of Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu. This Australasian and modernised version had the two mythical characters portrayed as a pair of knock-about comic muses, taking it across the country through a series of very amusing adventures. The performance by Mark Lisle and Shane Culshaw had that youthful charm only possible where natural theatrical manner has not yet turned into technique.

What also impressed me about the whole piece was the very strong injection of humour which is a necessary antidote to the rather serious idealism common to people of this age. Even so, the latter part of the show took on a somewhat too conventional air.

It did not, however, spoil some quite moving personal dedications played on tape in which the performers was called off stage by name at the end of the evening. This was one of those stage ceremonies which can so easily be magical, but headily felt essentially might almost be called holy in terms of the intention of the project it was a singularly appropriate ending — and hopefully a new beginning.

'An idle backwater in the theatrical stream . . .

THE SHIFTING HEART

RICHARD LUTHERINGHAM

The Shifting Heart by Richard Byrne. Brisbane Arts Theatre, Brisbane. Opened 26 June 1977. Director/Designer: Jennifer Robinson, lighting design: Spencer McPherson and Simon Byrne.

Poppy Banks, William Butler, Lella Paul, Beverley Wood, Gino Bonachi, Mark Battistelli, Monica Banks, Dorothy Scherer, Clarry Fowler, John Gray, Mary Fowler, Liliana Fuggaro, Bruce Peck, Neil Harrison, Debrae Simpson, Loretta Day Robinson.

The Arts is a theatre I infrequently frequent. Subtly has upgraded its status to professional administration, and its cramped but workable little theatre is part of a complex which includes a top class restaurant. But even when an interesting play finds me in the audience, I usually emerge unmoved.

The play has an unfortunate house style, an approach to plays and to their production on which time has passed by. To it

profound irony of Bontemps's speech and dramatic technique, ABC radio actors and producers, and cultured debaters. They've created an idle backwater in the theatrical stream, giving pleasure to their own kind and little else. Individually, I find some of them do good work on other stages, but the Arts brings out their worst tendencies.

The *Sighting Power* tried to be more than that, but wasn't. A story of Harlem migrants in Hollywood in the 1930s on tale of prejudice revealed her substance. My memories of this production, however, were of theatrical artifice. The acting was measured and external and due to the pace. It was played in the mixed-cast local style - the audience - and - no - upstage - turn style. The set made a stab at realism, but looked odd when you looked at the details. The audience were mostly high school students presumably studying the text, they made jokes about Wags and rolled Julia down under the seas and were generally inattentive. The programme offered 'low-on-and-low-on-again' notes from which we gleaned that one enjoyed the chance to play a character role, another was an expert on accents, a third was doing his British debut, and a fourth wanted to become a professional actor. Really stuffy.

I'm being partly unfair to Jennifer Benthompson's direction, which was a clear exponent of the play, she at least seemed aware that the play had something to say. Everyone else involved seemed lost in self-absorption and the rolled tongue of THEATRE. I've no doubt this gives pleasure to some, but it hardly merits serious attention.

"La Boite has done it again: breaking fresh ground, confronting us with language in the raw ..."

OPINION

DON BATTLELOR

Written by Seneca, adapted by Ted Hughes, *La Boite Theatre, Brisbane* (opened 12 July 1987). Director: Rick Bingham (designer: Bill Hinkov, original music: Howard Davidson, lighting: Paddy Thomas, stage manager: Ian Woodhead).

Cast: Michael McCaffrey, Jocasta Pat Thompson, Cecos, Erith Asari, Tyrone Ian Baker, Maria, Nicole Inouye, Margaret, Peter Murphy, Michael Garry Cook, Steve, Doug Anderson.

My acquaintance with the tragedies of Seneca is slight and is filtered through the scholarship of others. As to the original Latin, it is all Greek to me.

I must, therefore, take it on trust. Here once like T. S. Eliot that Seneca's inter-

ludes were rhetorical rather than theatrical, that his tragedies were not designed for public stage performance by professionals but for private recitation by amateurs. "In Seneca the drama is all in the word, his characters all seem to speak with the same voice and in the top of it." The style is apparently long-winded but impressive ornament with obvious psychological allusions, and bristling with epigrams and moral precepts.

Feeling not altogether secure in my ignorance, I did try to get hold of the first Hughes's adaptation which I know La Boite to be using. It is the one commissioned for Peter Brooke's 1968 production. My efforts were unavailing, so I took what occurred the reasonable course of breaking up on my Scepter before limping up to the theatre. I might as well not have bothered. Scepter is another dramatic world altogether from Seneca, for alone Seneca was assisted by David Turner and then adapted for the stage by Ted Hughes. The story in the same, but the order, structure, and intention are quite different, and, surprisingly, such as I have heard some people trying to make, seem pointless.

Indeed, Hughes's work deserves recognition in its own right. In one sense, it is true in the Senecan model in that it certainly isn't a play — there is a staged poem for solo voices and chorus. The style, however, is clearly of a different order. Never does it become uninteresting. It rivets my ear as legal, direct, and vigorous. The appeal was appropriately vocal. I vividly recall shuddering at the Slave (Doug Anderson) described an apparently persistent detail the ageing, blinding eye sockets of Oedipus.

The whole cast did superb service to the text. Rick Bingham had lifted them up to a pitch so intensely concentrated, so committed, that the resonant power of the language survived even where vocal resources did not clearly measure up to the intention. Of course, with various voices, there were many times when what ought to have been a primal scream was in fact a raucous scorch, but it would be foolish not to acknowledge the audible achievement. La Boite, in fact, has done it again: breaking fresh ground confronting us with language in the raw — muscular, sensory, at full stretch — assaulting our large ears with the busy and busy word. The whole event was a salutary reminder of the neglected potency of the voice. The best phrase I can find is to call this company amateur in the full sense of that misused word.

Above all, it was the discrimination of Bingham's production that ensured the proper focus in the presentation. The setting (by Bill Hinkov) was simple. A red floor on which was a pattern of squares suggesting a net or the maze referred to in the text as an image of the life of man suspended over the whole acting area was a pure cold canopy through which the sickly amber light shone. It was a great pity that the piano lacked away in one of the entrances was allowed to intrude throughout the whole performance on an

otherwise pristine space.

The main performers were superb heights and depths to unselfishly, that which I meant to have been the idea, namely the suggestion of pathetic vulnerability when man is so stripped of his outer garments, was largely realised. It was unfortunately impossible, though, to dismiss the distracting associations of Bontemps's allusion altogether.

The cast — on stage for the entire evening without interval — was wisely kept small. A mere eight people, including a chorus of six, each of whom was from time to time a "character" in his own right, for example Cecos, Tyrone, the Slave. This must have allowed much individual attention during rehearsals, and ensured a generally high standard of attempt if not always of achievement. Chorus work was thoroughly disciplined teamwork that must have been painstakingly prepared. Individual set pieces, most skilful of unrelieved monologues, were explored in a range of vocal effects so that the result was never monotonous even when bodies were still.

It was pleasing indeed, to see how sparingly movement was employed, usually as some large symbolic presentation of the main line of the text, though occasionally as an image in counterpoint to the narratives (the bodies of Oedipus and Jocasta "take victims twisting together" during the sacrificial speech of Tyrone is an example). The temptation towards physicalisation of particular parts of the story was carefully restrained — even at the telling of how Jocasta came into her offending womb.

I specially liked the focus of performance and production in the climactic scene when Oedipus (Michael McCaffrey) in an irreducibly sustained account is drawn inexorably, in a vast spiral, through the intervening physical barriers of people whose characters he ignores, ever onwards towards the central truth of his damnable incestuous relationship with Jocasta whom he finally confronts to perdition at the centre of the stage.

The other excellent performance was that of Doug Anderson as the Slave. When he first spoke, the open glazing window was a sudden distraction, but the simultaneous effect of the scoring and shaping of his swelling monologues was unmissable.

Beside these towering efforts, Pat Thompson's creditable Jocasta lacked the necessary terrible archetypal dimension.

The music deserves special mention. Howard Davidson provided a very few sparse and elemental phrases for single sounds which very occasionally gave bleak colouring to the spoken words. At the final moment of the piece, when we were almost spent, one shattering electronic blast of timidity rose the audience. The gentle ball-games that followed, and McCaffrey's husky rendering of "These Foolish Things Remind Me of You" at the linking point were a most acceptable transition to allow one to find one's feet before facing the world again.



'... quite the most satisfying Ibsen production seen in Australia'

THE WILD DUCK

RAYMOND STANLEY

The Wild Duck by Henrik Ibsen, adapted by Ray Lawler. Melbourne Theatre Company, Ardenhouse Theatre, Melbourne. Opened 14 June 1977. Director: John Sumner. Settings designed by Richard Price, costumes designed by Megan Vossart.

Characters: *Ray Lawler* (Jens), *Gary Down* (Hedvig), *Frankie Bain* (Old Raskin), *Edward Reynolds* (Mrs. Raskin), *Mary Robinson* (Mrs. Grotz), *Yvonne Carter* (Second Cousin), *David Downer* (Third Cousin), *Polina Dunn* (Old Werle), *David Greenwood* (Grippe), *Bruce Myles* (Hjalmar Ekdal), *Simon Chilvers* (Gus Ekdal), *John Hamilton* (Hedvig's Father), *Sally Cobble* (Selling), *Barry Hill* (Molvik), *Robert Hewitt* (Hansen).

"Great disappointment — Ibsen's new play is not by any means up to the mark," wrote the Norwegian's greatest champion, William Archer, to a friend on 11 November 1884, immediately after reading *The Wild Duck*. Since Archer had been married less than three weeks,

possibly he did not give it his usual methodical attention. Be that as it may, for the next decade Archer tended to understate the play well, learning how highly it was regarded after a production in Copenhagen, was "inclined to give more credit to the excellence of the acting than to the same qualities of the play". In fact, partly due to pressure of other work, it was not Archer but his wife, Frances, who converted it into English.

When in May 1894 *The Wild Duck* finally was staged in London, Archer, certain it could not succeed, actually advised against its production. He went to the first performance "if not precisely prejudiced against the undertaking, at least with the gravest misgivings as to the probable result". Although the acting eventually left much to be desired, he left the theatre after seeing Ibsen's play "most more deeply thrilled by a sense of his genius". Some 18 months before Archer's death, to Harley Granville Barker he was referring to it as "Ibsen's greatest play".

To-day Ibsen is frequently considered dull, a bore and dated. Hopefully, many holding these views will have seen John Sumner's production of *The Wild Duck*, staged by the Melbourne Theatre Company, and share my opinion that it was quite the most satisfying Ibsen production seen in Australia. For me it was also the best-measured classical by the MTC for a

long time and — with the exception of *The Clerk* — provided the strongest all-round acting seen from the company for many months.

In fact, almost everything about the production was outstanding. For once the director did not appear to have tried to compete with the performers, being content to provide a symphonically set and allow the acting to speak for itself. Almost every role seemed perfectly acted.

Certainly Simon Chilvers has never been seen to such advantage as in the great comic role of Hjalmar Ekdal who, learning he has been cuckolded, as it were, tries to rise above his own violent nature. Archer considered Hjalmar "come to the point of caricature" and "as comic as Sanchez Pagan or Malvolvo, or Mr Macdonald. The actor who should fail to keep the theme as a root in his monstrous selfishness and humor, and posing self-pity, would be a bungler indeed".

Chilvers assuredly lived up to Ibsen's envisaged character and, although later in the play, on opening night at least, there was a slight tendency to trip over into melodrama, it really was a very fine performance.

No less admirable was Bruce Myles as Grippe, fulfilling the difficult feat of making him believable. Thus there was the very finely spoken Dr Selling of Barry Hill, another outstanding characterization by

Edward Hoppel as Old Skidd and Robert Hewitt — by looking so grotesque — as tacitly making something of the thankless role of Mafick.

I was less happy about the Gals of Julia Hamblin. Bugged down by an accent which seemed to fluctuate slightly between Australian and Cockney, her performance would have been more acceptable coming from a galled amateur rather than a professional. Presumably her accent was meant to indicate her servant beginnings, yet Marie Raddaway as Miss Sorby, who apparently replaced Gals as the Warle household, spoke in neutral tones.

Although Sally Cahill was all right, I have seen Hedwig whose performance has moved me far more. And surely Hedwig, whose cynicism in talking, should be wearing pasties — at least to read with?

This production was successful in extracting every ounce of the play's humour, assisted by Archer as being so essential, there were probably some touches not even realised by them, but which in no way jarred. Perhaps more could have been done with the lighting. These attached much importance to this and wanted it to correspond to the basic mood prevailing in each of the five scenes.

Over the years people have argued about the symbolism in *The Wild Duck*, and probably will continue to do so long as it is performed. Wendy Summer played this drama. When the play opens, with the almost Puerile-like revelations of plot and who's who by the servants, it flashes through one's mind that perhaps there is something. However, soon one is gripped in the complexities and ultimately lost in admiration — as always with Ibsen — at how each speech contributed not only to plot, but to character-revealing of the person making it and to whom it is addressed.

Key Linder has presented an excellent, concise adaptation of the play, mainly aimed at making the original Archer translation (by Francis and revised up by Williams) more speakable and plausible for the present day. It was far better than the heavy-handed home-sourton German film version that opened the Melbourne Film Festival, which whittled down Gals's role but played those apparently unacquainted with Ibsen's original.

One hopes the MTC and the Lander-Sargent team will follow *The Wild Duck* with other Ibsen adaptations. Maybe John Gherard Berkman or Leslie Eyolf?

A circus that is 'just about a dream come true . . .'

WAITER, THERE'S A CIRCUS
IN MY SOUP

GARRIE HUTCHINSON

HAIR: There's A Circus in my Soup, Last Laugh Theatre Restaurant, Collingwood, Vic.

TEAM DIRECTOR, TIM ROBERTSON
THE CIRCUS LAMBLING, DOUBLE HANGING PONY
AND FINEST BROTHERS, THE BROTHERS, THE
DARK DANCE, HIGGINS, THE BROTHERS, THE
TIM CUBBER, GAMES, PANTS, THE MAFICK
RINGSIDE, PETERSON, THE CIRCUS

There ought to have been a circus in the soup of theatre-restaurant patrons a long time before now, but as far as students of the game can recall, there hasn't been. Maybe a clown or juggler or tumbler in a forgotten Warner cabaret, but nowhere in any Australian theatre restaurant. There were a couple of midweek artists at the Treble, Melbourne, and Caprice, Sydney, but that's about all.

The current show at the Last Laugh Theatre Restaurant and Zoo is a collection of circus acts performed by a bunch of loonies, mostly from New Czeck as Adelaide. I have seen them several times before, and they're very good. This time around the show is performed by clowns, rather than by acrobats. Was that the act area? Very good, but the performers can get the necessary involvement from the audience by having around a lot of European Theatre circus rather than American circus material.

An example in the Chinese place now. Here's a dozen hunchback poles are set in the stage upon which are spun dinner plates. The idea is to keep them all spinning at the same time. The spinner therefore has to run up and down to keep them going. Plates fall off. Near-misses occur. Things go wrong. Because it's a pretty sort of act, and the audience knows it's not incredibly difficult to do it, it's immensely entertaining. Clinging.

So it goes with some more difficult stunts. Like balancing on top of 10 chairs. Twisting around, hanging from a rope. Walking the high wire. Walking the high wire backwards. Walking the high wire blindfolded. Unicycling the high wire. Standing on your head on the high wire.

Then there's a series of unicycling events by the famed Italian heavy Mafickroppe, or something like that. Fairly simple lot of unicycling, on little ones, bigger ones, a six-foot version and even a 12-foot one. Done with a nice sense of comic style. There is also a bit of slackwire walking and juggling. The whole show is thoroughly entertaining and fits into the Greenwich style of the past like a Frankfurter in a roll.

There is also a substantial late show in which the same gang of mid-fitting dancers perform various miracles with huge playing-cards, terrible jokes, undesirable moves, top-dressing while juggling, balancing on their piggy backs and the like. It, too, is good clean fun.

This circus is just about a dream come true for proprietor John Pinder, and in the ideal sort of act for his room. It doesn't even need a line of elephants, or 48 hours, to run forever.

This prison play deserves to be given a chance outside

CONSPIRACY

GARRIE HUTCHINSON

COMPANY: by Peter Branson, Penridge Jail
CAMPUS, VICTORIA, 1981, 1982, 1983
PROD: David Ewer, Darryl, Sam Taylor, Margo
Bing, Russell, Mervyn, Gail, Raymond
Barton, John Roberts, Ivan, Linda Fletcher
Moore, Chris Robertson, Crew, Ross, Ralph
Petersen, John Jandani, Fred, Kevin, Ron
Dennis, Rod, Lawrence, Leslie, Howard,
Tim, and Peter, Les, Michael, Michael, Gary,
Keith, Peter, Alan, Lillian

It seems remarkable that Australia's prison system has turned out as many competent playwrights as it has. Some are more than competent, which makes their achievement, given that it has taken place away from the conventional theatre, even more remarkable. Without speculating too much on the socio-psychosociological dimensions of the subject, (one currently noted in a well-disciplined Ph.D. student, by the way), it seems to be an important kind of Australian theatre. It isn't the theatre that is working in prisons, like some children's theatre groups play at kids but prisoners doing it themselves. This is something.

I had the opportunity recently to see a new play by a new writer, Peter Branson, who happens to be in jail. It was performed inside Penridge by other men who happen to be prisoners too. Plus a couple of assistants from outside (it's called *Conspiracy*, and it has the potential, with a little work, to be quite a play for one of those non-meat-and-sandwiches commercial producers).

It deals with the situation of a couple of seemingly homeless men who happen to drink a lot. They are persecuted under the Vagrancy Act, remedied by these somewhat frantic, portrayed by the Salvation Army, but through it all keep a fairly mild and cheerful attitude to their situation. One wonders why they simply aren't left alone to live their lives as they choose.

The major character is Darryl, played by all of it's worth (and quite nicely too) by a natural performer, Sam Taylor. He's grubby, funny, resilient, convincing, a bit of a Mank O'Neill like accidental paragon. Fred, played by David Ewer, is a more philosophical and educated but again a humorous character.

The play itself, which has the first half set in an alley, and the second in the watch house, is really a sequence of problems that Darryl encounters, with a fair amount of propaganda about the real situation of men like him thrown in. It would be a lot tighter without the propagandising, as the other material makes the same point. Poor old Darryl never gets a gig, never has the opportunity of getting out from under, even if he wanted to.

Conspiracy is the sort of play that is admired by the theatre director as it turns all personnel into a big and enthusiastic audience in its moment at Punt Ridge, and deserves to be given a chance outside. But because the fortunes of companies are so dependent on the success of each individual play, something like this won't get a chance. Except at La Mama, perhaps.

the cast were basically inside a classic and duelling against stale tradition

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

JACK HERRICK

The Cherry Orchard by Anton Chekhov. Presented by The Alexander Theatre Company in association with Monopoli, Alexander Theatre, Melbourne University, Melbourne. General Public. Opened: 1989. John Beckler and Geraldine Pease.

Topography: Christopher Crooks, Yvonne Ross, Shillingford, Pauline, Pamela Ginter. Trump: Simon Mason, Lloyd Cunningham. Professor: William Grah, Garry, Malcolm Robertson, Logachin, John Wood, Peter, Ray, Frank, Raymond, John Ross, Yvonne, Judith Crooks, Anna, Jackie Ross, Cunningham, Wendy Robertson. Characters: Judith, Malcolm.

The narrative has bones of a Chekhov play frequently have the set of melodrama. It would not be too far to suggest that this is the reason for their unparalleled popularity in the theatre. People enjoy a cheap weep. They draw reassurance from the universality of others, especially when these lamentations are elicited in the end of Tragedy. School curricula inevitably contain a Chekhov, along with that other major melodramatist of our time, Arthur Miller.

Chekhov used not and should not be treated as a cartoon in layers-faced agony. The playwright himself would be appalled. He saw them as comedies. Yet almost unforgivably in production they invariably get cast into the dark realm of bathos. Without a little and absurd humour permeating counterpointing their serious drama, the central characters are too simply and too in nature of Fate. A world of humour enables us to realize that these characters are at least partly responsible for their misfortunes, for the disintegration of their own lives. Through the context of comedy their pain, a sort of a bourgeois kind, becomes not passive and respectable but active and self-aware, hence more intelligible and complexly affecting for the audience.

From one perspective of *The Cherry Orchard* we can see as reflected, indulgent and incompetent upper middle class finally capitulating to the energy and drive of a

new rising capitalist class. The right of property by blood and class becomes in the right of property by merit and an ingenuity. Taste and sensibility give way to hard-headed pragmatism.

Taking a quick cynical look at the family, one is not too sympathetic towards the process of social evolution. They positively glow however when one scrutinizes the warper and their traditional values. The cherry orchard itself, which is to be sacrificed on the altar of progress, is an obvious symbol of Old Russia, the gentility and culture of its choice class. The metaphor does become a little more concrete and vivid when one thinks of how our own House of Commons delight in demolishing both natural beauty and architectural legacies — for example, the plundering of the floor of Walter Burley Griffin's Capitol Theatre in Melbourne.

A successful contemporary production of *The Cherry Orchard* to my mind hinges on sharply balanced paradoxes set in a general atmosphere of comic social comment. Peter Oyston's production, to its credit, attempts to force some opposition, but sidetraps as ironic sociological overview and seems to positively tremble at the thought of political collision. In the programme notes Oyston pleads in the student minds of the audience a few possible political parallels which aren't at all discernible on stage (Trotsky's speeches in the second act, incidentally, are cut) yet in the same time he dares not write as he sees as 'political' — a foolish case why not. An ideological slant on *The Cherry Orchard*, if that is the director and cast's bag, could incorporate a number of resonances, stretching from economic hints of modern Russia to the banality of a corner shop being swallowed up by a monopoly.

To return to the central business of the play, any production worth anything to attempt to achieve, to reduce possible melodramatic imbalance. *The Cherry Orchard* presents at once the challenge of multiple layers and interlocking scenes, the comedy of terrible chance, a defiant status quo or a humble future, divided patron or baroque opportunism, class or mediocrity.

When I saw the production, the evening had a good ensemble feel but was rather slow to generate itself. The first act lacked verve and life, the characters were too bland, the initial tensions loose. As the play progressed characters gradually gathered individuality and distinct shape, and dry-eyed wit at last started to ring it out with emotional firestorm. While it is a more honest thing to catch actors exhibiting grace in looking, particularly when a lot of our theatre is distinguished by acute stage-of-the-hand, I felt this production at times left actors occasionally unmoored, asked — the tears and gloom did not seem to authentically arise out of tear-producing, glow-igniting dramatic situations on the night. I gained the impression that overacted and gifted actors had been a little ill-served by the director.

Oyston, who is Dean of the School of Drama at the Victorian College of the Arts, is still to produce the goods, not the emotion, as a force in our theatre. It is naturally much too early to pass judgement on his institution, yet disarming remains evident that the central full-time staff is mainly English or cultural education, that the Australian content of courses is token and self-porting (eg. first year students last year having to dramatize the literary analogies of *Poor People*, M. Coward), that part of the second year course coincides with productions at Monash this year by the Dean which coincide with some HSC English Literature recommendations — all reinforcing a traditional conservative mentality.

As a dresser away from St Kilda Rd Oyston nonetheless manages to shut per formances ranging from the ordinary to the excellent. The delights of the evening were for me the Fun of Ray Evans, Wendy Robertson's *Demolition*, and the Yards of Ross Shillingford, the last two bringing all beautifully their wonder in the last act, where like many Chekhovian lovers they clumsily, or through mischance, fail to emotionally connect. Malcolm Robertson skilfully played Geyer as a lovable and selfless, as emotional wreck much given to tears and nostalgic penitence. This proved a fine and bizarre foil to John Blake's dignified and buttoned-up Katerin.

John Wood, who I have branded critically in the past, gave his best performance for a while when he found the actual interpretation of Logachin a puzzle any one — he named once a member of the family than some twenty names rich forest. Others in the cast moved around skilfully on the edge of platitudes, except William Grah and Judith McGlothlin who occasionally overstepped the mark and were guilty of deadpan wit. Jackie Korn, whose collection of Arns finally cut against the last act's potential melancholy, married her performance with a surface of campified hard gestures. Christopher Crooks as Yvonne, like Judith Crooks as Yvonne, was perfectly adequate, but gave little indication that he is likely to an antipathetic student of drama affiliate with his English professional experience. Pamela Ginter, on loan from the touring ranks of Melbourne's now disastrous commercial theatre company, Monopoli Productions, graced and powered early on as Pauline, then came home with great aplomb in the last act.

All in all, not an utterly stunning night at the theatre, though refreshing in that the cast were basically inside a classic and duelling against stale tradition. They were aided by an unapologetically contemporary stage design (the work of the Alexander Theatre was not disappointing). They were not, that much aided by a production which in the end lacked character, tough comic guts and a coherent interpretive framework. The programme notes, with their observations from cast and director, are likely to become a collector's item.



Catering for the audience or for Canberra's Thespians?

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW

MARGHERITA WILLS

How Does Your Garden Grow by *Jim McNeil*
Rep at Theatre 5, Canberra, ACT. Opened 23 June 1977. Director, Ross McGregor. Co-director, Ralph Coleman. Set Design, Bruce Seabright.

Brenda (Georgia), Andrew Stokman Sam Doyle Mackay, Nick, Peter Cullen, Stephen, Colin Fadden, The Women Julie Raul Ford O'Brien, Graham Price, Second Officer John Fay-Lock, Michael Crawford Senior Officer Alan Mason.

A bold and dominating performance by the set meant, as it so often does in Rep productions, that what might have been a performance of considerable size and subtlety on the part of the actors, became an attempt to keep up with a set design which, instead of accommodating the production, determined its course. It would be hard to think of a Rep production where critics on the record, highly laudable as itself, did not produce a set which, though striking and

visually pleasing, failed to marry with the play or the production. The sitting aspect of Theatre Three, larger than the seating area, does not lend itself to intimate production, and Ross McGregor, both as director and as designer (in the second production of *Chadley*), has consistently had success in breaking up the acting area to stop it from swamping the actors. This tends to get a little far, though, and the actors are often swamped by the set instead of by the spaces it fills.

It is Rep's proud boast that in its last season, it found work for three hundred and sixty cast and backstage crew. Costs of thousands are Rep's specialty and in employing them, it is no doubt admirably fulfilling the function for which it is subsidised by the Australia Council and the ACT Committee on Cultural Development.

Female Transport had a speaking cast of ten and a supporting cast of twenty-seven contracts and guards, who draped the stage and carried on with concern of their own which were as part of the action as of the play. Multiple attention focus productions have their validity, but they are written, not adopted. Twenty-seven writhing human beings, however artistically they work, command attention in a rather undesirable way which needs to be allowed for in the play's structure. It is hard to add them, however thoughtfully, without making them a distraction, rather than a comple-

ment to the action of the play. But twenty-seven extra cast members had graced the stage of Theatre Three, and Canberra's singing bodies of inspiring actors and particularly actresses, were appalled.

Ross McGregor's set for *Chadley* was once again striking — a semi-circle of windows at different heights, with concealed seating areas in front and behind. This meant, however, that actors not on the main stage were forced to move on a plane on their narrow platforms. In conversation they had to stand facing each other and therefore much of the dialogue, particularly when it took place behind a window, was stifled. Another dominating performance by the set.

The set for *How Does Your Garden Grow* broke up the breadth of the acting area with three rostra, each with its own door and a ramp leading to it from the rear wall which curled the stage. One of the two small rostra was Sam's cell and was never used again after the first scene; it remained, a threatening presence. Most of the action took place in Nick and Brenda's cell, the other small rostrum, so the audience stood most of the evening staring at a downstage corner. The large central rostrum was the courtyard. The set was all grey, with blue dripping stripes — meant to convey the darkness of a prison. I am sure, but instead I felt an impression that was rather gay and jolly, like a country fairground, as though someone had left the color out in the rain.

The use of three seating areas instead of set changes, meant that we were spared the music of hammers on blackboards, the hysterical screeching sound effect of a Rep production, but it also meant that a play whose unity of theme needs to be carefully drawn from scene to scene, became fragmented. The audience saw the main plot stage left, Sam stage right and assorted undesirable actors centre stage.

Rep has strong convictions about its artistic integrity and would be indignant at being judged on just a few professional grounds — no ticket prices show that? Yet when it comes to choosing between the demands of the forthright thespians of Canberra and the fairly discriminating taste of the audience, the audience has tended to go away, feeling just a little bit cheated. *How Does Your Garden Grow* was no exception. It was a good Rep production, with a strong and more than usually evenly matched cast. Yet the audience went away feeling that they had seen a scrappy play — which is not fair to the playwrights — and I went away, asking myself as I always do, "Does Rep set out to entertain me, or itself?"



A very acceptable but quite innocuous blend

MY FAT FRIEND

BILL DUNSTONE

My Fat Friend by Charles Laurence. Regal Theatre, Subiaco. Perth. Opened 30 June 1977. Director, Edgar Mitchell. Designer, Richard Hunter. Stars: Tim Brooke-Taylor, Vicky, Judy Nunn, James, Robert van Marckenberg. Tone, Roland Fawc.

Charles Laurence's *My Fat Friend* is a light-weight British conventional comedy, and quite good of its kind. Judging by the response of a large second-night house, when I saw the play, the author seems to have concocted a very acceptable but quite innocuous blend of sentimental comedy and mild cynicism.

As might be expected of a play tailored to please all and the more, *My Fat Friend* is not the least bit artistically adventurous. The author keeps to paths that have been well-trodden by generations of writers for Shaftesbury Avenue and popular British television. Even so, Laurence's characters and dialogue have an atmosphere and an appeal of their own, and his play undoubtedly makes a comic point within its limits. The characters, of which there are four, do not cover a wide range and they are slightly drawn. But such is a deficiency off-broad to be sympathetic and to sustain interest. The plot is a predictable arrangement of stock devices, and the delayed revelation and ironic reversal which wind the plot up can be forecast with ease soon as the first act. As for the plot it really is a series of variations on, and combinations of the old "condemned" and "slipping away" motifs — though I doubt if the author is required to be so attentive as to recognise the fairy-tale mythemes of the plot. And of course, all of the entrances and exits are carefully built comically, as they ever shall be in the well-made commercial play.

My Fat Friend relies on dialogue rather than factual action for its effect. The dialogue has a conversational style, with which each character has his or her own idiosyncrasy, and apart from one or two patches early in the second half, when instead focused on a record player machine, the dialogue is entertaining and occasionally clever. One passage of dialogue which has

been particularly well set up by the author even drew loud applause.

Laurence's play, then, is not for the current, nor for those who require the theatre to assault their minds and hearts. The main interest of the play is a triangular relationship involving Vicky, the overweight proprietress of a bookshop, Henry, a pompous civil servant, and James, failed author and excellent cook. Interestingly enough, though much attention is made of the bookshop, and some of the civil service, James is the only character whose work impinges much on his life. But the fact that James is an odd outsider (a Scottish perhaps explains that).

Laurence also uses within this triangular relationship a pattern of mutual dependency, vulnerability and role-playing. Each character has a weakness and relies on the others for moral support. So far, so good. But, some, handsome politician, arrives belatedly to win Vicky's heart in a one-night stand, and the second half of the show concerns the effects which Tom, now absent in Paris, has on Vicky. I myself thought that the plot would have been much more lively if Tom had fallen for Henry, but any sense of humour is perhaps of the minority. In any case, Vicky dies, in the mistaken belief that Tom will love her more when she is dead. Laurence tries to make psychological capital out of this — the once plump and stuporous Vicky takes on a spiky, self-assured personality to match her thinner self, and the hand of three breaks up — but the psychology of this transformation is too transparent to support the comic point that Laurence tries to make. That, and some blatant symbolism involving a Christmas Tree, a candle, and a favourite dress which is cut up as a gesture of rejection of the past, are the artistic flaws in the play.

Edgar Mitchell's direction moved the play along smoothly and steadily, making the most of the humour and sensibly letting the play speak for itself.

The bulk of the play was carried by Tim Brooke-Taylor, as Henry, and Judy Nunn, as Vicky, with excellent support from Robert van Marckenberg in the role of James. Tim Brooke-Taylor, of "Goodbye" fame, caught the peculiar manner of London "bump", and brought a softness to the part which enabled him to play the old and dying in the final scene. Judy Nunn contrasted the fat, affectionate Vicky well with her thinner, cooler self, but obviously fat men at home on the slightly more emotional climaxes of the last scenes. Robert van Marckenberg was a great success as James, the obstinate virgin who is the object of attention from both Henry

and Vicky. Roland Fawc's performance as Tom was on the right track, but a little too tentative, especially in the second act.

My Fat Friend follows earlier successful seasons of *Some Time Next Year* and *The Elements of Benjamin Franklin* at the Regal, a converted cinema of great capacity and dusty "class" splendour. I find the success of each of these shows a cause for some rejoicing, not the least because they have topped such large stages. Here's hoping that we will see more such



On the tentative side but adequate

TRIFTS

MARGOT LUKE

Trifts by Christopher Hampton. The National Theatre Company at the Playhouse. Perth. Opened 10 June. RTT Director, Anne Norrish. Designer, Ian Russell. Stars: Leah Taylor, Patrick, Peter Ransley. Dress, Brenda Miller.

It seems to be shaking down into a pattern the commercial theatres are doing the funny comedies, the prestige plays do the new ones. As long as our laughter is tugged with interest and we waste minutes of snoring, there is some guarantee that we are not yielding to superficial entertainment

Disorder and boredom offer a poor substitute for intellectual challenge but at least there is the virtue, an ingredient added to empty-headed triviality, and therefore the product must be superior.

But it is! Obviously the Royal Court Theatre thought so when they accepted Christopher Hampton's *Topos*, as were they surely dazzled by his past achievements in *The Philanthropist* and *Servants*? And did the Playhouse fall into the same trap? Certainly the audience was bewildered, murmuring words of encouragement like "It's not slow but quite funny, at least in spots, and so!" And there was the frustration: remembering next day "Yes, I think I laughed a couple of times but I can't really remember what they meant all the more for that about."

As a summation up it is on the sensitive side, but subacute. The subject is painful to fly and she thinks speech clearly intended to serve as a vehicle for spending dialogue. The dialogue in *Flaccid* with occasional licks in the teeth "You have a very aggressive way of asking a question," says one character. Answer "You have a very innocent way of not answering it." Then there is a note who can cook. Says the other male character — "That man will be the mother of my children." Oh, the behavior, all.

I did like the line about the journalist whose paper didn't let the wenger through, but most of the humor is an anthology of already results between three non-obsessives

The fact that they do not leave their cardboard truck is one the mark of the local production. Goodness knows, Aaron Nimmo has his three actors in a frisky activity. Dennis Miller is surprisingly loquacious, Leah Taylor favorably seductive and ardent, Peter Hawley differs contentedly.

But there is another reason not to dialogue to suggest an alternative for these people outside their beckoning triumphalism. Who would have guessed Dennis Miller was playing a pawnman, not Keith Tapler an impostor, unless there had been a couple of magical references? Even the beheading is confined to the immediate situation, and concentrates on possessions — which person is to have sole right to the other. Give the original pawnman of Anna, or Patrick, the interloper. There is also some serious discussion about literature and the fate of a rag "good for making love on — a man's couch." Memorable line.

Close with others where in the present spectrum of drama this particular effort belongs. Entertainment, the category it was apparently entered for? Quite marginally Social concern? Closer it does resemble. Finally, the contemporary ambience of unloving intercourse, host social and sexual. Of course, Noel Coward, living in a more elegant age did more lightly, but might not a playwright observing the present scene pick a winner out of characters, more convincing both in their attitude, and their actions?

In an effort to add a measure dimension

there are staged intervals — brief dance-dyotches showing the characters in postures symbolizing their current states of mind. These are a little oddity on the body of the play — dumbly and finally let by what appeared to be another with the horses

One disagreed on whether in absent of some wondering why the telephone was called "Treaty," which seemed to have little application on either side of the footbridge. Toward the three-quarter mark we revealed the relationship between Dave and Ann taken on from a distance — Ann is puzzled for regarding her lawsuit as "Treaty" for her name. What is required is that she becomes the submissive female in a wordless scene, during which Ann wrestles with her liberated nature and the telephone, the point of the play finally emerges. Ann goes in. It is left to us to decide whether we regard this as inevitable and sad, as the natural order of things, or left to us. As the play is unusually brief (ending at 10 p.m.) there is ample time to debate the rest at



Talking about voices

THE HUMAN VOICE
INNER VOICES
CLOSE PRIMER

Age Group	Total	Male	Female
18-24	~10	~10	~10
25-34	~20	~20	~20
35-44	~30	~30	~30
45-54	~40	~40	~40
55-64	~50	~50	~50
65+	~60	~60	~60

The Human Voice by Josselyn Cresson. Held at The Wall Theatre, Perth, West Australia. Closed 1 June 1997. Late Night Show. Drama.

Mr. John Vidura, night manager, Stephen Edwards, production manager, Andrew Martiano, shift lead, were in the room.

Inner Flower by Linda Newry. Hobart the Wolf Theatre, Perth Western Australia. Opened 26 June 1977. Director: Milla Mavor, daughter. Neil Maxwell original music, Helen Houghton lyrics.

Iran, Geoff Kelton, Marybeth, Geoff Gibbs, Leo, Lydon, Patsy, General, Andy King, Anna, Francisco Ali, Baby Face, Helen Haugh, Madeline, Alan Fletcher, Peter, Caroline, Jay, Sue.

George Moore by Alma de Groen, Green Bay, Wisconsin. Perils, N.A. National Theater Company. Opened 1 June 1977. Director Andrew Ross.

The Hole-in-the-Wall Theatre has recently been the venue for some quite remarkable acting in theatrical language. Coincidentally with her appearance in the Hole's major production for June, Stoppard's *Travesties* (reviewed in the last issue) Judy Neman appeared in a late-night weekend-only production of Jean Cocteau's *The Human Machine*, and this has been followed up with Louis Nowra's amazing new play *Amor*.

Continued play is really a triumph for a safe farcical performer — all the success lies in the capacity of the actress to hold the audience's attention for some thirty minutes — all of which turns the woman of the play spends speaking on the telephone to her recently departed lover. The playwright has allowed himself some room to move by having the conversation of which we hear only the woman's words take place over a party-line women's "phone," so that the humanity of the play can be occasionally viewed through intermissions from other women although once again, these voices are remembered to us only in terms of the woman's anguished pleading and rage when she is cut off by them from her lover. A solo note using the telephone conversation demands much of an actress — a good sense of pace and timing, excellent concentration, an ability to evoke "the other" with a minimum of the aid, the play of responsive thought across her face. Jade Nease possesses all these attributes and her performance was utterly convincing. One does forgive the shortcomings of some of the writing — the conclusion of the party line, some heavy-handed interpellations of repressive material made implausibly part of a final conversation between snowflake lovers — and was content merely to see Miss Nease fulfill the promise of the programme note, and turn a page to history. She was ably assisted by John McInnes.

It, as a play, Cowan's *The Muses* Pure is quite forgettable, such as not the case with the Hole's *Judy* offering. Louis Nowra's *Inner Voices*. When I first heard that it was an Australian play, and knew nothing else about it, I must confess that I gazed awestruck at the thought of yet another three-act about self-consciously Australian residents/artists/business executives based outside of looking

strange, fishing in friendships, fishing in scholarship/let/loans, and being alternately morose and merry about their failures. I discovered myself with the thought that it might be just another stab at national self-definition via local legends, an entry in the *Book of Mabel*, *King O'Malley*, *Moore O'Neil*, *Sally Bunter*, even *Lord help us Hughie Teller* school of *Ockmore*. At least such things are generally lovely. All of which discounts merely the tenuity and the fallacy of post-colonialism, for I was both surprised and gratified to discover that *Joan Foster* boasts neither poem trees nor North Shore mists with shaggy dogs, but instead takes the stuff of eighteenth century Russian history and weaves it into a magical vision of the complementarity of communication and suffering. *Joan Foster* is not just a good Australian play, it is that infinitely better thing, a good play. And it has earned, from its director at the Hoth, Mike Morris, the proper respect, and been given a stunning production.

To say *Joan Foster* is a good play is not, obviously, to say that it is a great play. Mr Morris has taken the historical fact of the incarcerated Ivan, the prisoner in exile of Russia, who was shown off the stage of history by Catherine the Second, and decried, from infancy to manhood, any human soul but that of his own name, and has reinterpreted this fact with a fictional coup d'état, organized by one Minovich, an invisible guard over the prison. In one respect then, the play is another kind of *Polesana* before, the *Isolation-Isolation* play. But the play is also about loneliness, and about power — and as a pseudo, more and more about the exploitative qualities of language, about how our participation in the game of language (and hence the world) both enlightens and oppresses, about our terrible dependence on "the other" made more terrible by the intolerable nature of the only alternative, silence. And the reason that *Joan Foster* is not a great play is precisely because the burden of its many meanings is sometimes too great for the vehicle of the action to bear — but only just, and one is forced to admiration both of Morris's audacity and the next success of his attempt. What was that someone once said about? "The last infinity of a noble man?"

If the play is Australian in any identifiable sense, it is by virtue of its style, it has a minimalist "rough theatre" quasi-Brechtian feel to it, which feel has been endemic to Australian drama ever since the palmy and productive days of *Isolation*, *La Marna*. It must be said that Brecht is not the only accessible influence. Mr Morris is nothing of an actor, and all the shadowy figures who loom in the background of his play, the *Handic of Kasper* in the most distant.

I will not venture a synopsis of the plot, which is both too simple and too complex to render a bare outline meaningful. Let me say only that the play begins and ends with Ivan imprisoned. In the beginning the imprisonment is physical, merely, and the

protesting is a pathetic victim of historical circumstance. There is the ironic suggestion of psychic imprisonment also, with Ivan only able to breakish the collective key of his own name against the doors of silence which shut him out from the world. At the end of the play, Ivan the South, King of all the Russians, sits unopposed (as he has been from the beginning of government, his new sham of his exploitative advent, on the basis of his politics, awaiting his overthrow. He is imprisoned both by his kingship and his acquired knowledge of treachery and corruption, and even more by a rising avalanche of mocking voices — social historians and poets, satirists and tormentors, voices of the Self and the Other, voices echoing the anguish of consciousness.

Mike Morris, last year's Silver Swan award winner for best director, has only recently returned from a trip to the U.K. He has come back, with this first production, to the top of his form. The play moves, well, as one is not and economically presented, the pace beautifully controlled (after, that is, a nervously fast first few minutes on the opening night). Morris has also studied the production with some elegant postscript. The decried Minovich's gourmet meal, eaten, quite literally, off the bare torso of a reclining dwarf, was one memorable moment among many. These comic postscriptures are however beautifully balanced with some deeply moving scenes concerning the pathos of Ivan's predicament. Most importantly, Morris has shared some excellent performances from his actors.

An Ivan, Geoff Kelso gives his all. He is physically convincing, combining a stilled sense of the nervous to Ivan of physical freedom, with an expressionism of facial features, a kind of fine-lined fragility apt both for Ivan's "nobility" and his pathetic innocence. Kelso also employed a trick of a switch in the throat, a hint of a whisper, to give devastating effect. Ivan is a fine role, and this young actor played it up to the hilt.

As Minovich, the man who is both Ivan's liberator and his captor, his mentor and his enslaver, Geoff Gibbs was superb. Hardened, gleam, ramp, Medusa, Minovich shows all devastatingly vicious. Yet, as Geoff Gibbs played him, he has an almost Paganistic vitality, compounded by a pseudo sense of his own inadequacy in filling the "heroic" role he finds himself in. His helping, his physical presence and compulsive desire to upset even less the entrance of a simply vicious nature, and more competitiveness for his sense, of hatred, of his own loneliness.

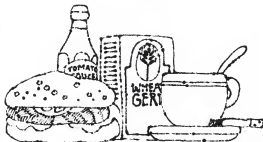
In the script, which I've had an opportunity to read since the play opened, the relationship between Ivan and Minovich is one of exploited and exploiter, and this is manifested by Ivan's outburst of hysterical rage when Minovich dies, a vision of passion and court intrigue. Ivan kills the corpse savagely and eagerly, as he looks, a stream of curses and his first comprehensible speech which ends with a barely ironic

"I'm talking, I'm listening." Morris, however, has opted for a deeper sense of a low-level relationship between Minovich and Ivan. Minovich's signs at Ivan's is capacity to learn set speeches for the French Ambassador are tempered by a seriously paternal concern, beautifully evoked in a wonderful scene where, with the aid of a daughter and a house, he attempts to immerse Ivan in the facts of life before the commencement of the King's arranged marriage with the young Princess. Ah. And when Minovich dies, there is no looking and cursing from Ivan, merely a bewildered incomprehension. But "I'm talking, I'm listening" is here heard with ironic pathos.

The example between Kelso and Gibbs is in fact a highlight in a production distinguished by a high overall level of performance. Andy King performs several roles most effectively and Iago. Sam, appearing on his knees for most of the show, is an adequately sinister dwarf. An Francesco Ali and Molydian, Helen Hough employs sweet tones to similarly sinister effect.

Mention must also be made of the design, again by Mike Morris, and strikingly suggestive despite its stark simplicity. Layered flats of steel mesh, with the light playing through them in patterns of imprisonment, were complemented by raised platforms arranged in a T shape and covered with broad bands of purple in primary colours. All of this "hard-edged" simplicity was focused on a finely incremental stained-glass window at the back of the set, in front of which Ivan the South is finally reborn. The set worked extremely well, both as a working area and as visual statement. It is good to have a man of Morris's considerable talents back working in Perth, and even better that he should have been given the chance to recreate those talents on the most exciting new play I've seen in years.

It's a pity that the next Australian play I had the chance to see, *Almeida de Groot's "Going Home"*, playing a few week season in the Playhouse Great Room, should have been such a let-down. A tedious and evasive piece of naturalism which does its best to convince us that "Australians are incredible overseas," it succeeded only in convincing me that Australians dull enough to do such plays are quite incredible here, let alone overseas. The dissemination of the action is a Canadian blizzard which forces four quite uninteresting characters, two of them, girls, actors struggling to make the international beginning and one unconcerned Yackalerman, to spend an evening sharing wine and swapping verbal blows. It's almost to be funny and boring, but I found it merely tepid and capable only of going on a pretty empty tank. None of the performers seemed at all provoked by what they had to do, but this does not excuse a quite unforgivable jargon in first eight minutes of fluffed lines. It was after all a professional production, though I'm sure I don't know why the Playhouse bothered to do it at all. Enough said!



'... exuberant, funny, patchy yet still marvellously invigorating

FOOD

MICHAEL MORLEY

Food by Tony Sanchas, Menu, Stone Folly Adelaide Festival Centre, Via Roma, Adelaide (opened 18 June 1997) Director, Mikalala Blacklock, musical director, Ramon Rabe, designer, Mikalala Blacklock and Tony Sanchas, choreographer, Tony Sanchas, Lenny, Martin Parker, Calista, Terrie Ellis, Harry, Alan Lewis, Gini, Tony Sanchas (back), Lydia Kennedy, Ann (David Barry, Bob, Frank, Matt, Carl L. Kennedy, Tamarah, Carl L. Kennedy, Wendy, Wendy)

First impressions — in spite of Oliver Wilde's contrary opinion — can often be deceiving. And in the case of *Food*, disarmingly so. Even at the best of times, you-sticks-are-not-in-my-taste, and when the audience was greeted at the door by two members of the cast waving burning wands and ushering the faithful into a room thick with smoke, my hopes for the evening began drying so rapidly as my throat — by now coping unseasonably with the swirling clouds of cocaine. The atmosphere was warmer than at Minsky's on a good night, and the sight of an anonymous figure seated at the top of the stage, clad in obligatory Harryhausen gear, was just about enough to send me

scuttling back to the less demanding rigours of television. But duty prevailed. I stayed, endured the first 10 minutes and found the man exuberant, funny, patchy yet still marvellously invigorating.

Controlled on the conflict between two restaurants — the one offering the delights of greasy Harry and his hamburgers, coles and coffee, the other the delights of vegetarian victuals and beautiful beverages — the work combines revue elements with a light-hearted look at the proposition that "there is what he eats". *Food* and *Calculus* have acquired their health-food haven through the generosity of Bob, the good fairy disguised as old tramp with a heart and pockets of gold, and a fondness for collecting corpses in a dishevelled poem. Allied with Harry are the Gankers, a biker gang who set out to make things difficult for the Gankers near door. No props for guessing the outcome.

The weakness of Tony Sanchas's script are obvious: an unhappily opening and a rather confused ending, and in between, a plot which seems more too certain of whom turn it is to be an stage and why at any particular moment. And some of the writing does not always avoid the dangers of a lamp sentimentality or clumsy comedy. On the other hand, there are moments — as in Bob's description of his (now dead) wife indulging in an improbable free-escape — when the lines combine delightfully with a very awareness of just how long one can trust an audience's response to the sort of heart-burning.

The action is driven with musical numbers, mixing hard, rhythmic rock for the Gankers and Harry with quieter, more

sweet for Calista and Lenny. The band copes well with the contrasting styles, and the ensemble work is tight and professional. Three numbers in particular stand out as showstopping ones for the Gankers in which they demonstrate the contrasting "cynical technique", and two marvellous solos for Calista. It's a little unfortunate that the music, for all its rhythmic vitality, lacks a distinctive style, and a few more numbers with a stronger melodic line would have been an advantage. Most of the dance routines went with sex and energy and the performers' enthusiasm had clearly been tempered with discipline and some hard work on set-pieces which looked more too easy. It's a shame to see an ad hoc group like this heading into dance studios where one doesn't square with embarrassment as the obvious lack of rhythm and the awkwardness.

And one could hardly talk of lack of style in the case of Terrie Ellis, who naturally stole the show. On this evidence, she's a real find, a few feet-and-a-bit dynamite. Not the brain-out-loud larger-than-life variety, but the sort that doesn't need to worry about making sure that everybody, but everybody, can see it, because in her case, you can sense it immediately. She has a real quality which comes over strongest in her singing and dancing and, with some coaching, could be brought out more in her acting. Her singing was at times stunning, a flourish voice that let the notes dead centre and was equally at home with the rock numbers as with the ballads. And the power act, in this case, simply the

amplified variety, but strong, well-focused and exciting. There aren't too many singers round the city who could make of her songs what she did.

However, the most memorable character in the show is Alan Lavan's Harry, a genuinely funny creation along All Garton lines. Battered and besotted, trusting his wife the way he treats both his customers and his hangers-on, he is a splendidly recovered part and gives a fine performance here. Alan Lavan. Even if there were nothing else to commend in the production, it would be worth seeing for him alone. For, though cast in the Garton mould, he's a distinctive figure, round-faced, misanthropic and instantly recognisable. I was almost sorry to see him get his part done — and rather pleased (in spite of higher feelings) by his final restoration. The scenes between him and the Gartons were hilarious, broad, comic and wise, and he practically had none of knee-baiting yet slightly menacing force that we find in the crowd and the round-hall. For this, full marks also to director Malcolm Mayloak and to Tony Strathairn, who, together with Kevin Kennedy and David Torr, made up an evening and up a trio of hours as you're likely to see.

Ford deserves a wider audience. There have been other South Australian plays that have been taken up by other companies which have had far greater weaknesses and fewer positive qualities. Another Strathairn deserves encouragement for he has a fine ear for dialogue, a keen sense of theatre and he can catch an audience's attention and hold it. What's more, he seems relatively unaffected by the creeping neo-naturalism which infects so much contemporary Australian drama. There's more conviction and accuracy about a character like Harry than there is in all the disaffected middle-class or lower middle-class poverty and protest that seem to people the stage at present.

Work in progress

TOO EARLY TO SAY

WALCHERRY

Two plays to say a programme of three plays presented by the South Australian Theatre Company. Playhouse Adelaide opened 22 June 1977. Director: Colin George. Designer: Richard Baskin.

A Place on the Planet by Ben Male. With Bill Taylor, Patricia Kennedy, Edwin Hodgson, Robert Russell, Craig Atcher. *Fields of Offerings* by Michael Cove. With Patricia Kennedy. *Family Love* by Michael Cove. With Linda Duncan, Dorothy Vernon, Michelle Rayner. Colin Ford.

The SATC has both the right and the duty to foster indigenous theatre, and, while local masterpieces are still to be had, it need do the best it can.

Three are not plays of patchy quality

would make an interesting evening of work in progress. These plays are ready to be worked on as part of the process by which a company develops its skill and creative capacity. But if we are to be charged \$5.00 a seat for a look at a stage-rehearsed theatre's work-in-progress, we should demand a more imaginative and surprising selection of unfinished work than this.

The major asset of the production is the acting of Patricia Kennedy and Ted Hodgson. They are technically competent performers who know how to look a bad line and exploit a good, how to use behaviour as an indicator of inner anxiety, how to say what they mean, how to evoke persons and to control it, how to keep still, how to listen, how to be a part of an imaginative world.

But these and other fine actors working with the company must not be trapped into believing that teamwork and being part of a company effort is a substitute for the actor's private and personal power for finding the right action to play and demonstrating the ability to play it. Learning about playwriting is learning about what can be acted. Writers for the stage must write to be performed and they must write knowing that an actor has got to be able to find a reason for grasping the motive of a script. Good actors must not ever be placed in the position of wondering some writer's garden unless the flowers are withered.

These three plays are not imaginatively barren. Blair's play has some interesting devices. Unfortunately these are developed toward the cliché. An oenologist puts himself locked in a railway cupboard in order to help prove a point and swallows the key to his padlock and chain. A headmistress is confronted by a dead-end alcoholic former husband. He has been asked to meet the train by their daughter who arrives complete with a combative bike/horseology student lover. She met her old Dad by accident as part of a coursework project while doing some kind of sociology study at University. The point of it all is to get Mum and Dad to hold hands on the railway platform to show that they still have some contact before they part forever. They do. Ruddy daughter then heads off for the hole to do something commendable with those of her own ilk. After the characters have departed, Colin George throws melodramatic comedy to the winds and has the poor chained-up ship wheeled off on a porter's trolley by the stage management, as though representing a last director's opportunity for farce. There is a real relationship built up between the old alcoholic and the school headmistress. Because of it the script is given some sense of reality. But I simply cannot shake off my recollection of the look of the co-incidental elements of the plot as lidded as a way which implied that the audience was certainly meant to laugh from time to time, but only at the characters, never at the unlikely circumstances of their basic situation. Sometimes this script drags a little at the

heart, rarely at the head and never at the belly.

Fields of Offerings by Michael Cove is clearly meant for the heart. An old Russian lady moves in an Australian hotel, where the robes speak Russian, so that, by a simple convention, the old speak English and tell the audience about her life as a Russian Jew. Included as an account of a multi-plot tape inflicted upon her is a conversation with Princess Kennedy's technical mastery of her craft recovers the script from the daunting summary of all these waters who have flooded this so much better. Why does the lady speak that to the fourth wall of an Australian hotel?

Family Love, Cove's second offering suffers from the same problem. The characters address the audience about themselves with no particular reason for unburdening their privacy. It's a Jewish joke, the play. I don't think that Mother usually says to daughter "Why don't you marry a nice doctor. A nice girl like you are", but she might well.

Rae Blair and Michael Cove are obviously talented writers and they have some fine work to their credit. In these plays there is observation, imagination, considered opinion, some well turned phrases and speeches and some skilled weaving of rhythm and pace. I would have no objection to more about the plays so decidedly if they were not afflicted as full blown productions in a major house. They are work in progress.

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Adrian Slack, director of productions of the State Opera of South Australia, tells of the company's painstaking approach to production of a rarely performed Monteverdi work

THE CORONATION OF POPPEA

The exigencies of any performing arts company are best revealed by analysis of the aims of a single production in that these more indicate the general attitude more precisely than a mere listing of future repertoires and discussion of what we would like to do in an ideal world. Financial, musical and technical problems force us to be practical in approach, to face restrictions and to try to re-create works of art with more imagination than physical resources. In our case, a grand example serves to illustrate. We are currently planning a production of *The Coronation of Poppea*. Why *Poppea*? What do we want to achieve?

The music of Monteverdi, though not unknown in Adelaide, is rarely given major

exposure. People tend to assume that opera started in the 18th century with Mozart and finished at the beginning of the 20th with Puccini. Many writers either before or after that period are regarded as oddities. We intend to show that there is nothing odd or fanciful about *Poppea*. It is a powerful mass-drama, constructed along Shakespearean lines, about lust and its supports.

The main plot is paralleled by sub-plots, as in Shakespeare, to underline the degrading effects of lust, not only upon the individual, but also upon society as a whole. Lust causes a royal divorce — the top of society crumpling up. It causes the final decay of Sparta, the ruin of principles on which rests a stable society had been

based. Injured parties, otherwise honourable people, are driven to acts of murder.

The story of *Poppea* and *Poppea* is not literally true, it is based upon various unconnected events during the reign of Nero, which Monteverdi and his librettist, Ruzante, put together to illustrate macrocosmically the main theme about decaying values.

On this main idea musical director Myer Friedman has based his conception of the work. Monteverdi wrote only a bass part and a vocal part, leaving other parts to be filled in by any instruments he found. He also left a great deal up to the performer, who approached around the basic musical structure (perhaps one of the reasons for the present resurgence of this sort of music



'In an unkind world, the only way to achieve success is to remain strongly committed to the work in hand, stretch the imagination to the limit'



is that it is closely allied in principle to the modern forms of abstract music and to jazz. After some thought, Meyer decided to use Raymond Leppard's realisation of the Monteverdi score which, in contrast to many others, is luxurious in orchestral colour and uses Leppard but takes Monteverdi's original and moulded it dramatically and orchestrated it in a nicely decided manner. This, therefore, was the ideal sound through which our conception of the piece was to be projected.

The problem then was how to reflect this not only in the action — a fairly straightforward matter — but also in the visual effect of the design. Together with the designer, John Cervetto, we developed a Renaissance view of Rome — grand, but slightly sugary and self-indulgent. Consistently shifting patterns of pattern were intended to convey the instability of the world in which the characters lived.

So far so good, now for the production. Blomqvist expressed our desire to approach the work in the way indicated we were faced with financial and technical problems. As we wanted to gain maximum contact with the audience and a degree of intimacy which would make the general effect more powerful, it was decided to use the Playhouse at Adelaide's Festival Centre complex. The construction of that theatre immediately presents a problem regarding the use of the orchestra, as there is no proper orchestra pit and the space

available is very limited. Instead of using for a different venue for the performance, Myer Fredson decided to use a small orchestra and make his effects through plenty of detail and precision of sound. Two harpsichords will be placed at either end of the pit, giving a stereophonic effect, which compensates for that area frequently employed. In addition, there will be a small string-orchestra and an organ. As significant moments of the design, there will be odd splashes of orchestral colour, such as the addition of trumpets — so that the audience is constantly kept on its toes so far as the musical effect is concerned. Poppea rather than Isabella is now the central figure which we will use to project the drama.

The stage design, when presented, were found to be simply too expensive and could not be reduced effectively without destroying the overall flash splendour they were intended to convey. Back at the drawing board, Cervetto started again. The second version was very different. There were still the columns, but much starker. The self-indulgence was removed from the concept and the lines of the design became much harder. What the audience will see is a much more solid impression of Rome than was intended at first. The change in visual presentation in no way affect what we want to convey — they just mean that the selfish Poppea and her lover Nerio have more to destroy. Rome and its society look solid

and stable in the present design, and that the ideas of decay and degradation will come to the audience as more of a shock.

These technical and financial problems have forced us to rethink the way of presenting Poppea. It requires discipline not to lose sight of the initial goal — namely the moulding of the music and the drama into a unified conception, which will communicate itself to an audience — and (i) requires imagination to find alternative methods of conveying that same conception from the stage and orchestra pit into the stalls and circle. To achieve this goal we need time for meditation, discussion and experience.

Time is our most valued asset. In this company, we try to guarantee it as best before and during rehearsals. Our duty is to prevent waste of the highest possible quality and to encourage in all the people who work with us their obligation as artists to deliver deeper and deeper into the opera in question so that their performance becomes richer and fuller, ultimately more truthful and more genuinely uplifting. Our aim is to entertain, to move people's spirits and to make them aware of what a human value music and how they reflect us. In an unkind world, the only way to achieve success in our aims is to remain strongly committed to the work in hand, stretch imagination to the limit, and never say, 'It'll be all right by the night'. In short, we must never be satisfied with ourselves.



The Sydney Film Festival

'I am not complaining about the trendy subscribers . . . They buy the expensive seats and support the addicts'

The Film Festival maintains everybody has their good-old-days and mine are the Queen's Birthday long weekends of cultural excitement and discomfort, when we can from one repugnantly cold lecture-room to another, as film followed film with barely enough time to take gas, sandwiches, meat balls and coffee from a thermos on the chilly-morning and freezing groundward. We were grumpy-voiced spectators and duffle coats and caps from which our ears stuck out, nose red with the cold and enthusiasm.

But that was long ago and far away, and it is now the 18 thing to subscribe to the film festivals in Sydney and Melbourne and Adelaide. Many of the subscribers never see a film except at the festival, and then they see only the big films, whereas your real adduct runs through every short subject, some of which reach laughter, or anger, or mind-boggling boredom.

I am not complaining about the trendy subscribers. But for them, the high cost of everything would probably mean no film festival at all. They buy the expensive seats and support the addicts.

Here I have to confess that I did not subscribe this year, and was able to write this article only because of the charity of the festival administration and a few subterranean friends.

Well, so good-trying over past winters. The grumpy-mood-mustard days were over when the Sydney Festival moved out to the Watergardens Theatre in the suburb of Rose Bay, and even came over when it moved into the city's State Cinema. I have nothing against the State; it has the authentic inside and exterior, the true architectural expression of an industry that is paradoxically concerned with money and dreams. But because the State is stuck in the middle of a city, some feeling of festival "separateness" is lost, with some sense of commitment.

I am sure all those factors have been weighed by the director, Mr David Serfaty, and his friends and helpers, and a decision made on the most practical grounds. I just think it's a pity.

So what was on view at the festival this year? As usual, a few complete works of art among the curiously interesting or influential or irrational or self-indulgent exercises. It may have been better to have a

Christian theme, but you cannot make a theme out of half a dozen commendable but not entirely outstanding features, and it just as bad as theme at all. The films I will remember from this Festival are Edward Munch, by Peter Watkins, *Raise Ravens* by Carlos Reuss, *Chinese Acrobats* by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *The Man on the Roof* by Bo Widerberg and a documentary, *Harlem County, USA* by Barbara Kopple.

One I most wanted to see, and missed and will never see because it will not get a commercial showing here (though it did get a commercial showing in London) was *In the Realm of the Senses*. This film is Japanese/French co-production directed by Nagisa Oshima from his own screenplay, purports to tell the true story of Sada, a servant girl and part-time prostitute who in 1936 strangled and castrated her lover, for love, and with his consent.

I asked some people who did see it what they thought. "Boring," they said. "All that screaming."

Whether or not *In the Realm of the Senses* is porn, the attitude existed here is

often used by people who are scared or moved by porn. They say, "Boring", but they don't mean it.

One night I sat next to a man who has been attending the Sydney Festival for 24 years. I asked him what he thought of it.

"Beautiful," he said. "Intelligent and beautiful. And interesting."

"Not boring?"

"Not at all."

"All that screaming not boring?"

"What can you mean?" he asked, offended. So I shut up.

Edward Munch is a film by Peter Watkins (*Cybele*, *The War Game*, *Invader*, *Pantherman Park*) about the Norwegian painter (1866-1944) and his work. The script is based on Munch's journals but strongly affected by Watkins's own recollections of his childish and possibly personal longings, emotions and work. Munch referred to himself in his journals as the third person and to the women he loved by a pseudonym. In many of his portraits the heads are turned aside as if the sitters did not wish to be recognised. The action in Edward Munch — really not action at all, but people that Watkins found when he was working on the film in Oslo — has the same closed faces as the people in Munch's portraits. And coming out of the film I met an acquaintance who had been recently in Oslo, and he said that the faces of the people in the Oslo cinema have that same closed look.

The theme of the film is reclusiveness, frustration, fear of any expression of emotion, the repression the characters put on.

Edward Munch



of being strangers even on their own kitchen and bedrooms. One is aware of Mensch as being extraordinarily brave, of being capable of having anything in his own life, even madness.

Widberg is a most accomplished filmmaker. He has matched his own situation to Mensch's emotional, expressive in porting.

Rose Rose (in Spanish *Cris Gervasa*) is by Carlos Saura, and takes its title from the proverb, "Rose roses and they'll pick you your eyes." It is about a little girl who sees clearly, as a child does, but particularly, as a child also does. The child is named Ana, and is played by Ana Torroja. Her mother (Geraldine Chaplin, in filling all the hope and trust every have had in her) is cut in the mother who dies of cancer. There is a father, a soldier and womaniser, who also dies suddenly. Ana and her class are left with a speechless grandmother in a wheelchair, an aunt and a maid. It is 1973, and the film starts forward to 1993, when Ana is an adult (Geraldine Chaplin again) looking back on childhood, and understanding why others did as they did, and why it seems so strange to her. *Rose Rose* is a disorienting film, memorable, and well worth a second look when it comes on commercially, just well.

Chinese Roulette was my first Fassbinder film. There has to be a film Fassbinder for everyone, I suppose, and I enjoyed *Chinese Roulette* (nothing to do with Russian roulette, in fact a game

without patash, a sort of truth test of the hand played on wet Sunday afternoons at a holiday home, but a good deal more risky than your average holiday-maker would care for) for its cynicism, its beauty, its inevitability, its darkness and its acceptance that the amoral rich are more interesting than several wage-earners, which I expect they are.

Fassbinder is a West German, very prolific, who made two films in 1970, of which *Chinese Roulette* is the second. He is now making another called *Despair* with Dirk Bogarde.

The film is about a spy (journalist, land-speculator?) who takes his French mistress to his country chateau for the weekend only to find his wife there with her lover, who is his assistant in the business, whatever it is. They have sexually sorted down after some verbal awkwardness, when his crippled daughter and her male poverty-stricken friend. There is also a sinister housekeeper and her fat literary son with dyed blond hair, who loses the main handsome Frenchman. The only performer known to me is Anna Karen, who plays the French mistress. *Chinese Roulette* is choreographed within an inch of its life, looks beautiful in a naked kind of way, and if I say it is very German I can expect a shower of rude letters. All the same, it is.

I like it that Bo Widerberg's *Man on the Roof* was in this Festival to represent Swedish cinema, which was otherwise missing. The film is based on the Martin

Book character in the famous play of May Swenson for Widberg, which have become a risk with school teachers, and it employs some of the tricks we have grown accustomed to when film tells this kind of story. There is a reason behind every action by the man on the roof — the rope — and the men who have to go hang off it — his colleagues, policeman. The film deals with issues as subtly that are known to everyone, including us — police brutality, political uncertainty, popular apathy — in a remarkably perceptive way. Widerberg may be remembered for *Shame* (Stockholm, but *Man on the Roof* has the tough political attitude of his later film, *Adalen 31*).

Everybody will be able to make up their own minds about the star turn of the festival, Allan's *Three Women*, when it reaches the cinema, as well as that *Maïa*, Claude Sautet's film about French contemporary middle-class upwardly-mobile people which has the talented Michel Piccoli to lead it through.

I mentioned *Harlan County, U.S.A.* This is the first film by an American woman, Barbara Kopple, who began working on it in 1973 during the miners' strike in Kentucky and kept on working on it, with contributions of money from all over America, until 1976, when she finished it and won Best Feature Documentary at the New York Film Festival. *Harlan County* is real documentary film-making, in which the director imposes nothing but the discipline of the truth on her subject.

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Australian Dance Theatre

'What is really encouraging . . . is the relaxed, effortless cohesion of the dancers — a cohesion born of an ensemble of individual strengths . . .'

The Australian Dance Theatre, like the Dance Company (NSW), can no longer hide under guise of being a "processing group". It has arrived and must now consolidate its position.

Both these companies have (by and large) a well-trained team of dancers, artistic directors of proven ability and a repertoire of divergent yet consistently interesting dance pieces.

Yet the troubles of the Australian Dance Theatre, having seen them in their debut Adelaide season, seem to me to be three-fold.

Firstly, they are going to have to work long and hard to erase in people's minds the unearthing memories of earlier days.

The thing to do now is to reassure people that the new ADT is not semi-amateur in its philosophy, potential or performance standards.

The audience will be a young one, that being the only one that apparently is amenable to the art form. Being young, it will last a lot longer and it will be loyal; the company will be forgiven the occasional choreographic blemish.

The ADT is twice blessed in that it will have the capacity to attract audiences in both South Australia and Victoria. And the audiences are steadily growing.

As the opening night of the company in Adelaide, there was the usual depressing collection of dating ballet mothers and their resistant husbands, and (I must apologise in this stage).

By the end of the second programme, there was much desire in evidence, the age-group was between 20 and 35, they had paid for their seats, and the conversation at intervals was marked by intelligent appraisal of what had just been seen.

This is the audience modern dance attracts and desperately needs. The ADT is attracting it, and the process is ongoing. Their idea of open rehearsals at theatres on university campuses is a good one.

The second trouble facing the company is not only obtaining good dancers, but keeping them. Adelaide is not exactly the shimmering beach of cultural endeavour, despite the Festival Baroque, and dancers, being the perpetually restless they are, always seem to go overseas, looking for

new horizons, new techniques, innovative choreography and "self-realisation". They have every right to do so, it is also healthy, as long as they come back and do something towards enriching this poverty-stricken land of ours.

ADT needs more male dancers and female dancers with greater performance impact. Jonathan Taylor himself is dancing and that should not be so. He'd be the first to tell you that he's beyond it and he doesn't want to dance, he should be here to. Group-rehearsals are all very well, but an artistic director's job is to forge the company into shape, to choreograph works for it and generally run things.

Apart from this, there is at the moment far too much importance (and stress) put on the two Rambert imports, Julia Blake and Joe Scoglio, which is not to downgrade their self-evident talents but needs to highlight the disparity of talents within the company.

Other dancers need to undertake the load, otherwise, if some of them are not given lead parts, a demoralisation will set in, those dancers will look elsewhere and the problems will multiply.

The third trouble at the moment, as I see it, and one that can only be corrected by time and constant performing, is the discovery or forging of a distinct company style, a way of going about things, of attack and execution that mark the difference between this company and the modern pieces of the Australian Ballet (both as they are) and the Dance Company (NSW). It's a matter of training and choreography.

Now, I know, gentle reader, that there are teaching-troubles and any new company is bound to have them, and I know that Jonathan Taylor is aware of them, but someone has to point them out.

It would seem that the amalgamation of two States is the most reasonable solution for the Victorian Government to take to have an alternative dance company in the Australian Ballet performing in Victoria, it being apparently impossible to refuel Ballet Victoria (and there are more skeletons in the cupboard about the demise of that company than about former members of it or the Hume Government

are willing to acknowledge publicly).

I suppose it is better to have fewer companies of higher quality than to have a larger number full of half-stayers without the financial resources to realise completely their ideas and projects. Provided, that is, that those larger companies don't get half-bound by bureaucracy and box-office demands to the degree that they lose all impetus to adventure and innovation.

The ADT is determined to be a flexible group, building on its few resources and able to adapt to changing situations. If Jonathan Taylor has anything to do with it, such modification will never set in.

Professionalism is one of the most obvious qualities of the company. With one or two exceptions, technique is under full control. The dancers know the team and master of the works they perform, and are thus able to project them to the audience with genuine conviction.

With a debut season of new works, all of them either world or Australian premieres, there are naturally some that are better than others and some that should be dropped immediately. What is really encouraging, though, is the relaxed, effortless cohesion of the ADT dancers — a cohesion born of an ensemble of individual strengths, a group feeling that this is their company and that they are there to win over an audience gently, not to impress and overwhelm them.

The repertoire is limited — an intense piece there, a funny one here and a social-comment work elsewhere.

As I noted in an earlier article on the company, because of Taylor's background with Ballet Rambert and his present connections with it, a possible claim of the works are those liked from the Rambert repertoire. There's nothing wrong in that. Christopher Bruce's *Wings and Words* and are marvellous works in anyone's book and the stable of works that will undoubtedly grow has, in those two works, a high standard of invention and structure to build itself on and measure itself by.

The two works by costume artistic director of Rambert Norman Maconie I'm not too sure about.

His *Seven Songs*, set to Joseph Campbell's orchestration of songs of the Aeneid, looks, on first viewing, like one of those "scholarship" ballets without its character. Girls in long, floppy dresses of pure silk, shimmer across the stage, pausing here and there for a deliciously unfolding arabesque and picking off in profile jets, the new man, leap and support their women, or lift them high into the air as they gradually curl themselves around the new man and bodies.

B



A lot of it you've seen a dozen times before. It's pleasant and accessible, but leaves another tantalising taste for more or a memorable after-image — at first glances that is.

But the work grows on you. A sweet adolescent tramp through the summer countryside in those Avignon mountains (as, indeed, the beautiful Adelaide Hills). *Seven Songs* is shot through with flickering impressions, swift, evocative and mutable episodes, skilfully developed but never completely finished, which is probably its intention. It leaves one with a feeling of ineffable calm, like a fading remembrance of a very happy event.

A far cry from Morris's *Solo*, a well-stated "Woman's Lib" ballet. One woman, a trio of traffic tables and a shop dummy is all there is. The sole woman finds herself all grim, explores her spine and her limitations, the lounge, clubs and corridors over these tables, securing her superb fluidity in contrast to the immobile, plastic "perfection" of the shop dummy. But this exercise is interrupted by a man who ambles on and is struck by the "perfect female form" of the dummy. He lifts it, holds it, studies and adores it while opening the living creature next to him. She leans herself into his sight, but might just as well be a piece of furniture. The tension rises. The woman tries out a few medium social dance steps, pretends herself for the images the man wants, but backs off: those images have nothing to do with what a woman really is. But she still needs companionship, needs to be noticed. So she binds herself into the shape and image of the dummy, and is accordingly manipulated by the man as if she were one. Checkmate.

Solo carries conviction merely because of John Blake's finely realised performance. From start to finish one is captivated by even her smallest gesture, delineating those subtle but enormous differences between image and reality. Apart from that, *Solo* is dated and overrated. While choreographically it has impact, ideologically the work is (as) her colleague Woman, at least women who know what they are rather than what they are made, won't stand for that "making-do" stuff any more. *Solo* ends in defeat, which is no longer the case.

There's a lot more path and substance to Bruce's *Workland*. In Willoughby's *Foggy's River* there's a lively line that equates "barren relationships" with consciousness. That is a part of what *Workland* is about. It is also about control, male dominance, self-containment and self-play.

The title is misleading. When the two couples enter the stage, separately, from the darkness, one thinks of a *four-man* gathering somewhere for a pleasant "let's" weekend.

True, there is a lot of writhing and capricious, but points are constantly scored within it. The two men fix their powers towards each other, the women (there are three, and one of them is always left out of this very serious game) bubble together for "warmed" and sensory. The men just have to keep up the kind of self-sufficiency, their sensory is threatened. When the women fight back (or rather direct back), the men are static, not pleased, they can't handle the situation. Only when the women allow the risk-taking to go on can they function. There it is:

memorable moment when the women use the prone bodies of the men for support or as attitude — two of them, anyway, the third woman manages it alone.

doubtless there are hundreds of hands within the succinct and powerful work, but they can only be reached by the viewer. *Workland* has to be seen to be grasped. It is a perfect example of dance using its unique language to point right to the heart of the matter, going underneath the defences of intellect to reach the unblinked recognition below.

Needless to say, the dancers, Seagles, Wilson, Alan Israel and the others, merit in the cold, bloodless atmosphere of Adelaide's His Majesty's Theatre made it work with soaring conviction.

The same goes for Christopher Bruce's *Wings*. *Wings*, once again, is lively and vividly observed. The only snag is the belief is that it "evokes images of flight".

And so it does. The men in white tights (effortlessly ripped and torn on certain places) (especially the large birds — the albatross, eagle, falcon, hawk). The gestures here are wide and expansive, the wings spreading from the torso and the shoulder. The girls are smaller birds — swallows, sparrows and starlings. Their movements are quick, agile and terse. They swoop and career across the stage in a perfect spearhead format on "Wings they 'light', they group together and hop about nervously, when the men re-enter, the women scatter.

There are marvellously sensual movements for the men as they strut about, gently fondling their arms behind their heads as if holding their feathers. It is a pure work, with no obvious emotional overtones. Even when the male birds fight for supremacy, there isn't a touch of excessive human violence anywhere, it is all graceful and natural, just the way things are experienced.

Wings, again, is a perfect example of what dance does best. It doesn't copy from nature; it takes an image and creates it with beauty and power that have hitherto rarely been created.

Not all of the works on the season are of such a high calibre, thank the Lord.

There's Taylor's own *Ten Goodly Sport* — a song, a riot, full of pratfalls and deflower chemistry, but no less worthy than any of the others. Or his new Fisher-trickster, populated by lathered Pindaric and Pindaric dressed in painted bodements: a whimsical, well-managed work, playful and entertaining.

There are other works that it couldn't get to see, like John Blake's *Night of the Four Moons* or Taylor's *Listen to the Silence*, and, of course, later in the year there will be other works by other choreographers like American Cliff Keane and Sarah Saperstein as well as the company's dances themselves. When the company goes to Melbourne (performing in His Majesty's) I'm going to have a second look and I'm sure the marvellous company will have grown in stature and confidence even in a few short months.

The Queensland Modern and Contemporary Dance Company

B



The performing arts in Australia owe a tremendous debt to the old church hall. Within its worthy walls the arts have for many years found a ready home, and many now-flourishing careers were nurtured in the fellowship of Sunday-school saints undisturbed by faking copy-paste.

It was in such makeshift surroundings that I first saw the QM (as it is affectionately known). This was in 1972, and they were holding what I now realise was their inaugural season in the Park Presbyterian Church Hall. Even in those early days, they were looking to a larger future, and collected a temporary rooming of their resident home to The Park Playhouse. There was something grandiose in the air by the company that drew me to the place, and that energy has produced a rapid and well-coordinated development quite remarkable for an amateur company.

This month, QM is performing — and all on its own initiative — at the International Festival of Youth Grahamers and the Performing Arts in Scotland with their usual flair, they offered a specially choreographed piece to be performed at the dedication mass in St Mary's Cathedral, Aberdeen, to open the festival. In addition to the festival programme, they have engaged Ross McKim, from the London Contemporary Ballet Company, to spend the fortnight with them conducting master-classes in the Graham technique. The culmination will be a joint presentation at the Old Vic in London, where they will present a Garth Fitch work called *Queen* to the music of Malcolm Williamson.

Happy staff, you might say, for an amateur group only five years old. The tour is costing them \$13,000, and even then

the dancers have agreed to pay for their own accommodation. What I find so admirable about the whole venture is that the attitude is so businesslike. They clearly set it as part of a larger 10-year plan which aims to have a full-time artistic director and an administrator by 1983, and a nucleus of six professional dancers by 1981.

This grand move is all this to Ken McCaffrey. He got his start, as so many do, with Playfax Danseur in the Baller Theatre, but it was late, and there was no chance of his becoming a dancer. Instead, he set up a series of seasonal revues in the late sixties "to give the dancers something to do in the hall". It was while preparing one such programme in 1969 that he met Brian Coughlan. The combination of McCaffrey's organising ability and energy, and Coughlan's imagination and serious choreographic interests were formative influences. At first, the group presented single acts like *Mac-A-Rthur Park* at the 1970 Internal Festival of the Arts, or *Love Is As-4-Goodie-De-Fade* at the SGIO Theatre in 1971. By 1975, they were ready to establish the company and present a full programme.

To do this, Coughlan invited Jacqui Carroll and Chrisa Kikai as joint choreographers. Since then, QM has commissioned 40 new works from such people as Graham Watson, Graham Murphy, Geoffrey Chickens, Norman Hall, Irene Strube and Margo Murray. It is a mixture of his early influence on the company that Brian Coughlan is responsible for 13 of the 40 works so far specially created.

When Coughlan took leave of absence in 1973, he suggested Greville Watson as a joint artistic director. To my mind, Wat-

son has produced the most serious, vibrant and witty stuff in the QM repertoire. He was one of the outstanding artistic contributors to the 1974 Queensland Festival of the Arts. He remains a great choreographer and his *Enko Gila*, to the music of Luciano Berio, was the highlight of their first season in Twelfth Night Theatre.

Twelfth Night became the performing base of the group in 1975, when Stan Chambers was made first resident director and ballet master. The move to a professional theatre was justified by a doubling of audiences. Meanwhile, standards were improving with experience. At present, seven of the original dancers are still with the company.

This ensures a consistent and stable group whose talents are known by the most regular choreographers, but there is nothing loaded or vital in their approach. The aim is to have a very open policy:

- 1 To provide a wide range of styles of dance
- 2 To give opportunities to local and new choreographers
- 3 To programme at least one experimental work each season
- 4 To give assistance to young designers and technicians
- 5 To conduct training sessions for dance students to expand their knowledge of dance

The governing body is a board of six members, including the administrator and one elected dancer. At present, artistic policy is determined by the dancers themselves, who elect a co-ordinating committee. This experiment in self-management has been operating very successfully for almost two years. In particular, it has meant a highly well-disciplined attitude towards rehearsal.

Core members are required to attend three evening classes a week. These last one and a half hours and are followed by a three-and-a-half-hour rehearsal. Two months before an opening, this is increased until finally the dancers attend every work-week: Saturday afternoon, and all day Sunday — a demanding regime for amateurs.

Dedication and harmony were no characteristics QM and these are qualities which should soon carry the members to the professional status they seek. Already, in 1977, they are providing two accounts as part of a joint subscription series with the Queensland Ballet, which obviously considers them worthy partners to a professional company. I only hope that, when the full professional stage is reached, it does not blight the fervour which so far, has been so lively and fruitful.



'... important for creative people because they function like radar for a group which, probably more than actors, needs a seeing-eye into the marketplace'

For an industry which lurches so often that it sometimes seems to need a surgical tool, arrangements in Australia are frayed with a surprisingly healthy diversity of auxiliary services. The importance which the range and number of these services suggest is that the central activity must be blossoming: images, images!

Actors' agents, for example, abound. The phone-books' Yellow Pages list dozens of them. A quick peek at the cumulative interpretations produces a view which is no more real than the universal belief that more than 25 per cent of Australian actors either work at any one time.

John Gargulac once said that actors should select their agents with the same care as all of us, if we had the choice, should select our partners. It is a neat theory, but in Australia an actor could select on the strength to be an selector. The industry isn't sufficiently dynamic to have enabled more than a few agents to offer deservably distinctive services. Those that do are themselves disappearing among the prospective clientele.

Many of the agents seem to function as little more than naive intermediaries, with room clients on their heights that is good for the individual client, although rarely enough for the agent's reasonable profit.

Sydney's telephone book alone lists more than 70 theatrical agents and, while many of these deal almost exclusively with variety entertainers, the total is disproportionate to the on-stage activity.

Sydney also offers a selection of

theatrical managers and/or producers, a handful of theatrical make-up suppliers, and a phalanx of general theatrical suppliers ranging from the Archa Debus Costume Studio and Central Zoo through to something as far as Zapco Lightshows and Lighting.

Among these support troops, though, are one or two which indicate a sense of developing maturity and professionalism in the whole theatrical complex. Among them specialists casting consultants.

In Australia, advertising agencies were the first to give casting a bit of care, employing executives to specialise in the job. Theatre management and film producers, on the other hand, were slower to catch up, preferring to do their casting by a variety of ad hoc methods according to whim, prejudice or budget. Many still do.

It is difficult to say whether producers have been suffered through a lack of care in casting because, given the scarcity of Australian actors, there is little within industry beyond them. The old J.C. Williamson management produced several cases of pratfalls resulting largely because it insisted on filling principal roles on its own terms by a sort of executive consensus from lists of No. 2s and 3s around Broadway.

Film producers have sometimes used a single actors' agent to handle casting for them on a production-by-production basis, but it is only in the last few years that the function has been developed in Australia

as an independent professional specialty.

Producers in the field are Liz Mullinar and Hilary Linstead, who operate M and L Casting Consultants Pty. Ltd. from a mirror of first-floor offices on King's Cross. They seem pretty much unique in the business because they don't operate commercially as actors' agents. They run a company which represents writers, directors, designers, choreographers, chronographers, dancers of photography and dialogue directors but made what they describe as an ethical decision not to represent actors.

"It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to be satisfied if we were operating in both areas of the business," says Liz Mullinar. "The sort we could make a lot more money than we do, but we couldn't live with ourselves."

Liz Mullinar is a former actress. She comes from England. After arriving in Australia she was mostly doing the rounds of the advertising agencies when she met Hilary Linstead, who was working as a casting director for Lintas. They developed a friendship. On Hilary's advice, Liz gave up acting to cast for advertising. Hilary went to work for International Casting in Sydney, and then, six years ago, they decided to strike out on their own with their joint venture, M and L.

They say a hasn't been easy, still isn't. What profit there is from the business comes from casting for advertising. The bulk of the consultation, though, springs from the work they do for film and, to a lesser extent, the theatre.

Says Mullinar: "At the moment there is no real money in casting for film and even less, if that's possible, in casting for theatre."

Says Linstead: "I sometimes feel that all we're doing is pushing uphill. But then along comes an assignment to be casting for *The P.J. Holden* and suddenly it's all worlds wide again. But it's only now that producers and directors here are coming to

believe that a casting director is a specialist with something narrower to offer. Previously, a casting director has been regarded as little more than a highly paid secretary."

The McIlroy Brothers, Hal and Jim, were among the first Australian film producers to use the services of M and L. They chose them to cast *Paradise at Hanging Rock*.

Jim says: "They filled all the principal roles for us and went to enormous trouble to find the right children, and they were very important to the film."

"They interviewed or auditioned hundreds of schoolkids in South Australia to give us the ones who were just right. We would never have had the same to see as so many people as they did."

The McIlroys most recently have also used M and L to cast their production of *The Last Wave* — "not all the roles, but enough to make a significant contribution." They believe that to cast a film without such a specialist service is to look at the range of talent available "through blinkered eyes."

"Some producers or directors might have the time to get out and scout all over the place to get the sort of people they want, but we don't," says Jim. "If you build a professional relationship with a casting consultant, at least — which is what we have for Lee and Hilary — then you get what we get objectively in a very crucial area. Obviously there are times when you want or need to cast some roles according to your own judgment or for other reasons, but it's our experience that in all other circumstances it's best to have the casting to an independent consultant. Anyway, it's the international practice."

McIlroy and Linstead choose a film producer a fee for their service based on a variety of factors, including the film's budget and, naturally, the number of roles they're required to fill. They operate with a staff of seven, including two senior members who are on a profit-sharing deal.

Considering the constantly uncertain state of their industry, their overheads are formidable, but, judged by the extensive nature of the casting service they supply, they don't waste a cent.

"They operate to a maximum of keeping up to date."

"The only reason we're employed is because we're totally up to date."

They see every show, every rehearsal. They look at every actor, go to all the auditions.

"We've got files on everybody — 12,000 of them," says McIlroy. "We've got one girl who just takes press clippings, seeing where people are, reading the newspapers, discovering that some new actor has arrived. It goes on all the time."

Last year they were able to measure the level of their performance by cinema standards. Most Australians talk about overseas with a certain amount of awe, as if it's split with a capital O and as if it's every foreign country rolled into one. McIlroy and Linstead are cosmopolitan in our look, but nevertheless are especially impressed when they identify a foreign client.

They did the casting for the episode of Universal's TV series *McCloud* filmed in Sydney.

"It was probably a bit over anxious to do well," says Linstead, "but they were so incredibly quickly and expected everything very fast. The script came in at four o'clock on a Sunday afternoon. By the following Saturday the entire thing was cast in two States. Lee and I were determined to prove we can compete anywhere in the world. In the end, that guy kept saying to us, 'Stop showing me actors, we've cast a few stars already.' They were really very good clients and seemed to think everything was fantastic."

For them both, one of the most fulfilling assignments so far was the casting of Michael Thwaites's *F.J. Holden*.

"It broke so much new territory for us. We had to find so many new people, both in the western suburbs. But we found them, we found them all. We searched them out everywhere. And for the first time we used the media to help us."

Hilary Linstead: "I don't think I've ever previously had the courage to use the media in the way we did for *F.J. Holden*. We've always hidden behind our own judgment, played it carefully and done it bit by bit. But this was a special case, so we asked the press and radio for help. We were inundated. It was exhausting. Hundreds came in to try for the part of the lead boy alone. He was hard to find, but I think it worked."

It did work. The film was pushed apart by the critics, but there was almost unanimous praise for the casting. It wasn't attributed to M and L, but they long ago came to accept their satisfaction accordingly. It is as much, after all, the extraordinary case hope for. Then, and money, although in the Australian performing arts there's never much money.

The representational side of the M and L business is important for creating people because they function like radar for a group which, probably more than others, needs a stepping-stone into the market place.

The list of clients is impressive. Their stable of writers includes Ron Blair, Tim Gooding, Peter Kenna, Michael Lumberton, Jim McIlroy, Louis Nowra, Mick Rofsy, David Sala, Steve Speers and Peter Yeldham. They represent such directors as Gil Armstrong, John Bell, Michael Caulfield, Rodney Fisher, Colin George, Ken Hannam, George Higgins, Jim Sharman, John Tasker and Richard Wherrett. They look after such designers and art directors as Wendy Dickson, Kristian Frostickman and Brian Thomson, and the composers/musical directors on their books include Michael Carter, Patrick Flynn and Frank Euler Smith.

At the last count, M and L were looking after the professional affairs of almost 50 clients who are totally managed and represented. It's a full service, for which M and L charge a 15 per cent fee.

Harry M. Miller said McIlroy and Linstead to cast *Anna Karenina*, *Sopranos* and *The Rocky Horror Show*; Paraden-Patterson and them for Joseph and the

Amazing Trencher, *Democrat* and *Seppuku*, *Peppercorn*.

The precise structure of theatre in Australia doesn't offer great opportunities for the casting consultant. However, M and L have had an explanatory outing in packaging a production for the stage. They put together Ken Hens's *Mud and Sweat* to *To Know*, which was presented in Adelaide and then shown in Sydney and Brisbane. Given their other responsibilities, it was an exhausting experience, but one that has encouraged them to think of developing up the broader potentialities. With a good track-record in putting talented people together with talented projects, and a sensitive feel for the creative climates available in Australia, they believe that is how they would like to set up a production unit.

They say it would have to be a unit which would give them the freedom to use anyone's clients, not just their own. At the moment, though, the thought of the capital costs involved — not to mention the extra overheads — keeps the ambition on a disciplinary path.

Meanwhile, they've just completed casting for Anthony Buckley's production of *The Archbishop*, now being filmed in Queensland, and are working on consultants on the film *Australia* (between *Separation* and *Tape*). Their other credits in the last couple of years include *Sunday Too Far Away*, *Cable*, *The Fourth Wish*, *Break of Day* and *Known Day*.

From their position in the industry, they look at the strengths and future of filming in Australia. "It had to go far to go when it started that such improvement was a huge improvement. Now, there are good things being produced, but the most things have got to be even better and be international class. That's a really hard jump."

"At the moment, Australians are enjoying the experience of going to see an Australian film. It's almost like a first flush. But it's going to die unless the next films are quite considerably better."

"This is where the star system comes in. We still need one here. A number of things are preventing it at the moment. One of them is a lack of community of wealth. And then there's a lack of belief that an Australian star will bring people into the cinema. People are not sufficiently convinced of the power of an Australian star system, which means that they're not prepared to pay actors enough to make it possible for them to do a few quality projects instead of having to do a lot of rubbish."

"But the development of a star system starts really with the people who represent the actors, because they're the people who have to manage the client, to be discriminating about the jobs they take."

"However, it's difficult to be a star with all the tripping here. For instance, you can't lead a wonderful go-getting life so close within the bounds of Australia. You can't jump into your private jet and zoom off to Monte Carlo for the weekend. So there's the same of hospitals within our own country."

From Trader Faulkner, in Seville

A playwright ahead of his time

TRADER FAULKNER'S theatrical career started when Peter Fench asked him to make up speech (running with *Shower* Taylor). He then trained with Andros, the scabber, and began to take part in radio plays. His next debut was in the *Minister* (Seville, in 1933), and then up to more roles in Australia and London and on Broadway. Film and TV came followed, and a position for film-making during which he went to study in Madrid, Seville and Granada. In the 1950s, he started composing Spanish plays into English, which he continues to do. He is based in present in London.

The Gargantuan archetypes, creative of Gipsy, at his most "supernatural", in Valle Inclán's *Don Juan* (Seville) (Don Juan) and a challenge that can make a director and cast either back like the most atrocious moments of laughing Gipsy Gipsy force, or, if able to take the play badly and bring the truth out of it, Valle Inclán intended, can leave an audience with a very clear perspective on the original *Theatre of the Gipsy*, and a great deal to think about as regards the heavy metres which have underlain, and reveal, the beauty of human nature.

Maria Espinosa and her company, last seen in London in the World Theatre Season at the Aldwych in 1973 in Victor Garcia's controversial production of *Forma*, is returning. This time to the Lyttelton under the aegis of the National Theatre, with Victor Garcia's reformulated version of a play by Spain's greatest modern classical dramatist, Iñigo Leizaola in England, as given any major professional production in the English-speaking world, Ramon Maria del Valle Inclán.

Born in 1866 at a little fishing village, Villaverde de Arona, near Pontevedra, in the north-western Spanish region of Galicia, Valle Inclán was one of that brilliant and beautiful of intellectual Spanish thinkers and writers known as "the generation of 1898" who, at the final collapse of the Spanish colonial empire with the accession of Cuba and the Philippines, new Spain, to quote Valle Inclán, is "a grotesque deformation of European civilization", and set about, through some of her greatest modern literature, examining passionately the Spanish problem.

Valle Inclán has become a legendary figure, regarded as "The Predestined Son of the generation of 1898" because of his anti-establishment, radical, anti-traditional writing. He was the most accomplished public performer in Spanish letters since Lope de Vega, and for anecdotes and extraordinary incidents, he is matched only by Spain's other great legendary figure of the Golden Age, the satirical Quevedo.

In 1910 he went to France and wrote his impressions of the Western Front, later

published as *Madrigal* (a stellar vision of a moment of war). His experience in France and his disillusion of the European situation at that time, led to a personal crisis from which he emerged with a heightened sense of awareness. In 1920 Valle Inclán was to reach the height of his powers as a dramatist, his great plays over the next seven years would be a calculated aesthetic distortion of human nature critically observed and three-dimensional. *Galician, Hispanic, and Universal*.

He was totally motivated by the Spanish public for whom and against which he was writing, who supported

RAMÓN MARIA DEL VALLE INCLÁN 1866/1936

Collegary, Benavente, and the Alentejo Quintero brothers. He had always maintained that the theatre should be "a critical reflection which the public receives critically". He was writing at every social, literary, and regional level, and from a linguistic synthesis, to cross the chasm of everyday speech. A master of oral and literary tradition, a unique voice-promoting radical among the Spanish dramatists of his time, he was the precursor of Brecht, Gorky, Ibsen, and Beckett, and his dramatic output is only now coming into its true international perspective.

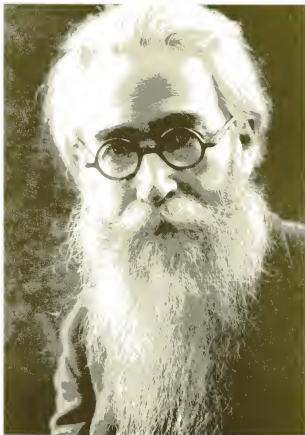
Adventure, lust and death, the constant, irony of the grotesque, form the theme and substance of the village tragicomedy *Don Juan* (Seville), in which Valle Inclán compares up in a remote village in Galicia, an aspect of Spanish society, where poverty and superstition predominate and where the marginal and marginal aspects of society — beggars, pimps, pimps, prostitutes, and a hydrocephalic dwarf — play out the drama of their lives like

puppets jerked into agonized life by a demonic and omnipotent power that exploits them and offers an light of redemption.

At a much deeper and subtler level, it is a satire on the dogma of Christianity, blind acceptance and totally mis-undoubtedly, and on the severe hypocrisy and warped sense of "honour", now termed "self-respect", of modern society. Valle's purpose in writing *Don Juan* (Seville) was to raise a society in crisis out of its apathetic indifference to the appalling conditions under which so many Spaniards were living.

Adventure is synthesized, with touches of brilliant comedy and satire, through the misadventures of the next-of-kin over a pitiful heritage of fortune, an abnormal, aristocratic dwarf who is dragged on a cart through the lanes and highways of Galicia, to be exploited as a money-spinner at fairs and pilgrimages. It is finally spread, after much argument, with a great deal of hypocrisy and false pity exhibited on both sides, that Maria Gula, the beautiful, passionate, frustrated wife of Pedro Gula, the victim, will avail herself of the profit earned through Laureano the dwarf for the first half of the week, so that Maria del Rama, the woman's sister, and also sister of Juan in Rama, the dwarf's mother, who dies of syphilis begging by the roadside at the beginning of the play, shall have half for the remainder of the week, Sundays to be divided alternately.

Last is characterized through the violent physical relationship between Maria Gula, seeking freedom through true love and adventure, and Laureano called Sepiano. Maria, an adult, seductive, powerful, disguised rogue sporting a green affluence eye-patch who with her homosexual hunger-on, Magda of Padena, the former pilgrimages and fairs she leads only a treacherous, forbidden love with Sepiano, who, superior in intelligence to the other characters of humanity, looks after Maria Gula, not only for carnal satisfaction, but because he can see the financial gain which might be his through their joint exploitation of the dwarf. At night, Maria Gula does not return the dwarf at the appointed time, and her sister-in-law Maria del Rama, apprehensive, and with good reason, about losing her share of the profit, sends her religiously bankrupt brother, the servant Pedro Gula, to be convinced on his adulterous wife. But Pedro, weak, and spoiled by jealousy and too much religion, seeks the alternative of allowing his wife and son-up but with the dwarf he finds for his daughter Sepiano. It is all handled with a



demonic intensity and grotesque behavior (rarely seen in the theatre) by the Spanish court under Victor Garcia.

Deadly strikes interperiodically through the unrequited love of Miquelín al Pedraza for Septimo Mesa, who, realizing that the dwarf will strengthen the bond between Man Gula and Septimo, goes into an overdose of jealousy in a wild scene of jealousy in Luchana's tavern. Here, with amusing respect Valle Inclán, equates the grotesquely comic and the tragic, in a matter of seconds, with the spine-chilling desecration of a madman-gigolo. The dwarf, meant to perform his tricks for his audience convulsed with laughter, but, suddenly over-excited, he has an epileptic fit and dies. Man Gula is then forced to return to her husband with the body of the dwarf to face the consequences and recovers her brief moment of liberty and hurriedly enjoyed love.

Now a bitter controversy rages between the two factions about who will pay for the dwarf's burial. Septimo Mesa, through the efforts of an old beggar woman, Rosa la Tardín, tries to lure Man Gula back, even though she no longer has the dwarf. He convenes a meeting where they can agree make love (in a camp-field) but, the vengeance of the malevolent Miquelín al Pedraza is implacable, he betrays them, and causes the villagers, who with shouts of reason pay, hunt them down like foxes. Septimo escapes, but Man Gula is caught and left to the mercy of a mob who wish to be recognized at all costs on the woman who has had the industry to try to find love and freedom. They force her to dance for them

in her stall, and, like an animal at bay, she rips off her clothes and dares anyone to lay a hand on her. She is hoisted up and carried naked to her deceased husband before the very church where they were married. When Pedro Gula sees his wife in all her naked beauty, in a crowd of excited peasants, first dominates rage and humiliation, and he tries to control them with the evangelical words, "Let those among you who have never sinned cast the first stone." But he manages only to infuriate them more. They hurl stones at him. In a sudden moment of aspenance, he shouts words of "amercy" whose exact sense they do not understand, but whose words have led them all their lives through the narrow paths of renunciation and oppression. With desperate rage, he shouts the "divine words" which had a moment before proved useless. "Que sea pronto el viernes, pronto es el fin del mundo señor!" The crowd is suddenly a lion and its fury abates, subdued by the melodramatic scheme, and it submissively accepts a truth which it does not comprehend, that perhaps it has never understood, and that it probably never will. The audience is furious and excited. Now, however she will remain a prisoner, bound, sentenced for the rest of her days in a dark, ravaged world guarded by a thousand superstitions, overwhelmed by a tradition which no one understands and all obey in an aura of Divine Pedraza.

The production was playing at the Lope de Vega Theatre in Seville, where it have just seen it, and soon due into the Lyric Theatre as its European tour, has been

designed by Victor Garcia and Nana Egner to explore the essence of a play which to many, initially as Valle Inclán has written it, and as Juan Louis Barbaud attempted to do in the Odeon in Paris in 1961, would take the essence of collaboration of Luis Buñuel.

The Spanish production moves at a tremendous pace, a pace of thinking as opposed to purely speaking, and a great number of subtleties are likely to be missed, even with the surphons commentary provided on the non-Spanish-speaking countries, as so much is suggested and actually takes place, in the imagination of the audience.

The scenery is simply as trucks. The mobile truck is a traditional stage device which was used in the two great "Comedies" of the Golden Age, the *Comedia de la Cruz*, and the *Comedia del Principio*, in Madrid in the 17th century, where Calderon, Lope de Vega, and Tirso de Molina were first staged. In *Divinas Palabras*, each truck has 10 organ pipes of varying length, all horizontal, from which five transoms extend outwards horizontally between each organ pipe, they are on an axle, and so can revolve exactly as a pair glass frame can swing. The trucks become the huge facade of a gothic church, as in the finale, a corn-field, the tower and facade of houses in a village street, a rectangular enclosure, Japan a church, a tavern. The whole thing, presented in a simple economy, is fantastic, the last marvel of it, and then enables everyone to construct the part of the play with its Beckett-like dialogue that is succinct and yet dimensional.



"Victor Garcia rings the changes from the wild miscegenated hunter you see among the Spanish Gypsies, to the deep-black feeling of the tragic sense of life seen in Goya."

Read on the printed page, the play could seem to bog down into turgid and ludicrous melodrama, but this is a case of inspired direction. The scene in which Mari Gula, dragging the dead dwarf home in her cart on the moonlight, meets "the Cobra Girl" the seismic aspect of her lover, Septimo, which she only recognizes as black, haired Satan who wants to take her far a "trick" through the arches of the moon, and the desert, or rather "jag" with her, is done in an abstract fashion, unmistakably phallic, but the writing and direction carry admirably. When Septimo and Mari Gula meet in the corn-field to consummate their love a second time, the cast, as phallos, splits the organ-pipes up and down, suggesting wind blowing across the corn-stalks, and voices of lecherous vine-girded villagers echo everywhere in pursuit of the unknown lovers. Everything moves and everything is flag, until the organ-pipes suddenly form an orchard staked inside which the mob hurls abuse at Pedro Gula and calls him a cuckold and a phallos.

"Why," I asked Maria Lopez, as we walked along through the tropical arbours of Seville's Mari Luiza Park by the river Guadalquivir, "did you choose the most difficult of all modern Spanish dramatists, Valle Inclán? And how did you arrive at this very simple and effective format of presenting such an extremely complex

play?"

"Valle Inclán, a playwright ahead of his time, is certainly one of the most important dramatists Spain has produced this century, perhaps the most important. His form of writing was new and original. He was virtually unperformed in his lifetime, and only now is he coming into the contemporary Spanish repertoire, but he is played in the traditional way. Spain in the past has had that very strong literary tradition based on the Golden Age writers like Tirso, Lope, and Calderón, the best being the be-all-and-end-all of theatrical presentation. Lope and Valle Inclán fought against this. They demanded imagination, symbolism, and, above all, the crude roar which we call of *grito*. Lope, as director of his theatre, created new visual forms; he re-worked the 300-year-old traditions, like *Paseo*, he saw afresh, and in a new dramatic. Lope's awe theatrical reality was rejected by the Establishment, pundits of his time, but these ideas have now become acceptable to and accepted by us through Goya, Lope and now Valle Inclán, who died in 1936 and was their predecessor."

"What was your reason for choosing this particular play?"

"It provided, as Maria Gula, a marvellous part for a woman of my age and temperament, the sort of part written in a bigger model than the actress can fill. Valle struggles you to your fellow human Victor and I wanted to carry on the work we began with *The Mouth and the Arise* and we felt there must be a new and viable way to approach *Don Quixote*, and to get

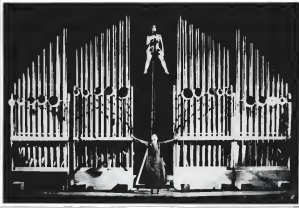
the essence of the play without being bored. We had to find another way, as Peter Brecht did with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We felt that, with *The Mouth and Arise*, we had the key, but it took us nine months of research and discussion to decide that the present production was the most for us. This included going to Goya and seeing what is left of the folklore about the Medieval world that Valle knew."

I told her the critics and public should not have already made the obvious comparisons between Brecht and his predecessor, Valle Inclán.

"The similarity between playing Goya and Valle Inclán is more human than dramatic. Both writers have an acute critical sense which completely condones their work, but the method used to present the work is dramatic form is quite different."

London marks the end of a tour that so far has included New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Moscow, Warsaw, Brussels, Amsterdam, Zurich, Paris, Washington, Athens, Venice, Bulgaria, the 10th Festival of the Arts in Plovdiv (Bulgaria).

With the growing interest in, and the development of, the Australian Theatre, where the national temperament is itself, the time now is ripe for Valle Inclán. What an opportunity for some imagination and enterprise! Australian temperament to bring this company on, to show the best Europe has to offer at present!





Performances on four vastly different levels

'... the most exciting production could almost be deemed to be the virtually miniaturised *Traviata*, which used a stage of postage-stamp dimensions ...'



Opera performance on four vastly different levels has been available to Sydney audiences in recent weeks, and the contrast among the various productions I have in mind highlights with crystal clarity some of the problems and pitfalls involved in successfully getting the most from an art form as on a stage satisfactorily.

It would scarcely be possible to imagine a greater spread in circumstances than that between the Australian Opera's production of Donizetti's *Lucrina Borgos*, starring Joan Sutherland, and the version of Verdi's *La Traviata* which launched the fully staged opera activities of Theatre Compagnie in a suburban church hall a few days after Midway between these efforts was the University of New South Wales Opera's Australian premiere production of Verdi's *Joan of Arc*, and at

the bottom of the heap was a grubby amateurish staging of Offenbach's *Count Dookh* of Gouda, which nevertheless has some first musical moments.

Obviously, one's expectations in any performance situation vary in direct proportion to the degree of professionalisation of the forces involved: an effort that might warrant a rave review if it came from an advanced student might be embarrassingly sub-standard if put forward by Joan Sutherland and the national opera company. With this important qualification in mind, the most exciting production could almost be deemed to be the virtually miniaturised *Traviata*, which used a stage of postage-stamp dimensions and an orchestra of 19, consisting the piano, which was used discreetly, he it used merely to suggest, the three

second-level when circumstances required.

This is not to denigrate the *AO's* *Lucrina Borgos* which on opening night merely lacked the infusion of a little more vocal power and dramatic fire to be an unequivocal success in the performance field, despite the immense visual handicap of Kristina Fredrickson's oppressively a priori set designs, which totally failed to capture the winter, sweeping horror that ought to permeate the piece from start to finish. Admittedly, this is a big problem with such an opera, for Donizetti's score is little help: entirely inelastic as it is, filled with overpowering rhythms and boasting a few glorious melodies, it only occasionally evokes the atmosphere of dread and foreboding that the Borgos of the opera are all about.

In particular, the holey troop of male chorists purporting to be followers of the Duke's henchman, Mastigella, were more funny than scary, dwarfed by long, thick sticks and wide-brimmed hats and moving about the stage looking for all the world like a swarm of bees in search of a suitable place to alight. And the great vocal horror moments of the piece — when, in the final scene, Lucrina offers the already dying victim of her mass poisoning coffin to rest on — was simply thrown away in favour of some ghastly phonemes which floated about indifferently behind a heavy grille for postage-stamp size, at best, a useful alibi to quiet the audience.

But it would be wrong to carp too much about such design failings of this *Borgos* when it had so much to commend it musically. In particular, it was nothing less than exhilarating to luxuriate in the glorious sounds made by Sutherland as the restrained, tender Lucrina of the Prologue encounter with General, though she sounded not quite at her best vocal form so much with the quickly warmed up and deployed the hell-like rich purr of her voice accordingly. Later in the proceedings, she proved just as capable as ever of belting out the big sounds when required, and she acted much more convincingly throughout than one would have expected her to be capable of on the basis of her previous Sydney appearances. As an all-round performance, her *Lucrina* ranks with the best. Sutherland Australia has never seen — in particular her 1974 *Hoffman* and the legendary *Schwanhede* and *Laura di Lammermoor* of 1962 — and naturally recalled her 1976 *Lohengrin*.

Robert Alford, who can always be relied on to give an outstanding performance, was a fine partner for Sutherland in the aforementioned line in April, after a

sports reading of his big aria in the preceding scene that rightfully brought the house down. Margherita Elkins sat a creditably dishing figure as the young Maf to Dream, and sang sympathetically, her drinking song in the last scene was every bit as much of a vocal highlight of the evening as a night to be.

Don Stevens acted superbly, as usual, and copied a good deal better with the bel canto vocal line than the inherent limitations of his voice would have led one to expect. Giovanni Pever's Bartolommeo was a little too much general all-purpose baritone/tenor for the part, though he sang well. Robin Donald, Lyndon Terracina, Gregory Yarnach, and Lambert Tarras were a fine quartet of young soldiers to support Elkins and Stevens, and John German and Peter van der Stoep more than adequate as the senior agents of Lucciano.

The second opening of the ADO's four-and-a-half month winter season at the Sydney Opera House was a revival of John Cox's 1974 production of Rossini's *Barber of Seville* featuring a new conductor, three new leads among the major principals and a somewhat unorthodox variation in the original Italian text. In advance, indeed, I would have been tempted to put it in a good deal more strongly than that foolish *critique* *counterproductive* in the son of quillots that spring to mind when one reads, in the abstract, any production of a comic masterpiece which misrepresents a language barrier between sparkling text and usually incomprehending audience, and it seems even then ridiculous, again to think, so much a thoroughly workable English translation in order to achieve some kind of parody, if undesirable, authenticity.

In the event, the objections faded away because improvements elsewhere in the Barber more than compensated for the loss of vocal comprehensibility. Michael Beauchamp, who returned the revival, had refined Cox's original at many points, the newcomers in the cast were, overall, at least as good in their roles as those they replaced, the old hands had refined their interpretations, and above all Richard Berridge proved himself to be as comfortable in dealing with this comic gem as he is when conducting in the more romantic and serious backwaters of the French and Italian repertory.

Added by Italian words that are far easier to sing out in the speed of light than any English substitutions, and an Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra that is increasing in its overall proficiency year by year, he was able to whip the extraordinarily (truly) Rossini ensemble into a positive frenzy of champagne effervescence that is exactly what has sustained the Barber to generations of opera-goers. Occasionally the revivists dropped a little, but astonishingly when Beauchamp was able to get his principals to move their moving sufficiently well to get across the point even there (Maybe, I suspect though it be to suggest it, the ideal solution could be to do the recitative in English and the aria and

ensembles in Italian, the Vienna Royal Chorus, a few years ago, did just such a favour). English rendition of Weber's little comic gem, *Die Meuse*, in the Society House (I had with remarkable effect).

An Italian linguistic tour-de-force was an interesting incentive to Elizabeth Connell, who performed the role in this production, and she was an amazingly better vocal force than for her career in last years winter season. Her interpretation of the role is quite different from Connell's, but quite as valid: though her singing voice has an odd dead spot between a heavy scotch-whisky and those gorgeously fluty scotch-whisky depths, it is a glorious statement and by and large she knows how to use it well.

Paul Pears, making a welcome return to the ADO after several years' study overseas, seemed very nervous to start with, his rendition of Almaviva's dangerously imposed opening aria and arioso were not as good as opening night in one might have wished, and he did himself out of sympathy after the latter by rushing headlong into the recitative which follows. But he seemed to relax almost immediately after that, when John Pringle strode on to the stage to sing his famous "Figaro, Figaro" aria with immense assurance and good humour. Indeed, the interplay between Almaviva and Figaro throughout this opera was admirably handled by Pears and Pringle, and Pears had proved quite consistently, before the evening was over, that he is a thoroughly capable comic actor whose pleasing lyrical tones is ideally suited to the bel canto repertory.

Alan Light displayed more of the vocal agility required of a Bartolo than he had originally in this production, and was a fine blisteringly comic foil both to Tourangeau's Rosina and Pears's Almaviva. Clifford Grant was a very good Basilio, and Mary Hayman once again made the most of her brief moments of glory in Basilio's singing housewife.

The production of Verdi's *La Traviata* which was the newly formed Theatre Company's first venture into fully staged opera was a remarkable success on a miniature scale. Staged in the tiny, but brand-new, Coleman Hall in the Bond Junction Plaza, it made a real virtue out of necessity — most of the time, at least. None of the principals was unknown to regular patrons of the Sydney suburban opera arena: Margaret Andrews (Violetta), Roy Ramsden (Alfredo), Vadim Lapov (Geronte), Roger Howell (Donten) and Pringle Rowe (Flores).

I had not previously encountered David Andrews in the role of conductor, however, and found him more than competent to cope with the demands of the piece. And the small hall allowed the mostly small-scale voices to be heard to their best advantage, and reduced the proportions of Verdi's to an intimate scale which one does not usually associate with grand opera. This treatment would not work, surely, with every opera, but it suits *Traviata* well — for two of the men involve only a handful of principals, and the other

two are by quite ingeniously played, as they were in this production, as the wife remains subject to the main thrust of the meaning's lesson.

Roger Cavell's University of New South Wales Opera presented the first Australian performance of Verdi's little-known *Jonas* of the 1832 years after its premiere at La Scala, Milan, naturally it was an almost unmitigated joy, though the staging and production left a good deal to be desired. It is no small feat to mount the Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra, which runs the Opera House pit, to say that *Jonas* or *Jon* boasted an even better instrumental ensemble, for most of Connell's moments were treated from the ranks of the Sydney Symphony, undeniably the best of the ABC orchestras.

And the three principals were all excellent. Beverly Begen, who had been unable to appear on opening night because of a cold in the nose, was still displaying the occasional trace of vocal worry in the second performance, but even so made a thoroughly pleasing *Jon*. John Mann was very impressive as King Charles VII of France, and Neil Easton gave a very good performance as Giacomo the shepherd, *Jon's* highly efficient father.

Naturally, indeed, the *Jon* of *Jon* could quite happily have transferred to the Opera House: the three principals and the orchestra would have no difficulty in filling such a house, though the chorus would have to be augmented and improved. But the production staff would have to be rethought completely. John Roberts's set design, basically a tubular steel scaffolding that made a valiant but largely unsuccessful attempt to cope with the awkwardly wide and shallow scenes (bare stage, provided performing areas that made the singers visible but failed to evoke the feeling of the piece. *Bored* *Barthol* production was too static — largely, no doubt, because of the physical constraints imposed by the set.

On quite a different level, the Proteus Theatre's stab at Offenbach's *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein* at the brand-new Australian Theatre, Newtown, had musical merit, though William Abernethy's production is better passed over without comment. Conductor Greg Hooper inspired a surprisingly accurate and stylish performance from his tiny orchestral forces, and Janet Walker had a good few moments, both musical and dramatically, as the Grand Duchess, Ian Delaney, playing the part of the handsome and desirable young prince, Prince Eric, was visually ideal, sang competently and acted adequately.

But beyond those two, the cast differentiated alarmingly into not-too-high campers and pure, unadorned amateur dross. Five directors might have made all the difference in this effort, or it was, about all one could do as self-defence was at back and head in the occasional vocal flashes of Offenbach was that since through even the oddly bowed-down version of the piece through the good offices of Hooper, and his modest small band of music men.

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To highlight ways of improving this situation a study of Sydney theatre has been made by a group of Management Certificate people from the North Sydney Technical College.

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The research ranged from the man in the street to the theatre owner/operator, from the theatre-goer to the top 100 public companies in Australia.

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A function which all thinking and concerned people should attend.

- The function -
- will be held at Chelvin Castle, 27 Shellbank Road, Gormona - ample parking
 - will be held on Tuesday 20th September, at 7p.m. for drinks and light meal and at 8p.m. for the presentation
 - will cost \$12.50 a single (or \$18 a double) and includes one fully bound copy of the report
 - R.S.V.P. with cheque by 13th September to the Secretary, North Sydney 77 Management Group, Box 436, P.O., Chasewood, N.S.W. 2087

Additional copies of the report "Venture Associates to \$10 each are available (postage paid) from the Secretary, North Sydney 77 Management Group, P.O. Box 436, Chasewood 2087.



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Six studies in drama for schools

'I despair . . . at the patronisingly clean-living tone in which these writers . . . speak to their readers'

Upstairs/Downstairs, J. Thorne Fernald, Fountained Books, Scott, Foreman and Company, U.S., 1976. Recommended Retail Price \$2.25.

Margaret The Maid in Lardner Program, Scott, Foreman, 1972. Recommended Retail Price \$4.00.

30 Scenes for Acting Practice at Student Level, Scott, Foreman, 1971. Recommended Retail Price \$4.25.

30 Scenes for Acting Practice at Student Level, Scott, Foreman, 1972. Recommended Retail Price \$4.25.

Improvisation Handbook, Samuel Elkind, Scott, Foreman, 1973. Recommended Retail Price \$2.00.

Speaking of . . . Thorne Red Meyer and Charlotte Lee, Scott, Foreman, 1975. Medium-sized Retail Price \$4.15.

(The next part discusses two books on all pages.)

From the number of educational drama books arriving at the offices of Thorne Australia these days it is obvious that this is where the big financial turnover lies in theatre publishing. In this and the next issue I shall look at some such books. Six of them, published at the L.S. by Scott, Foreman Company are designed as specifically for the school situation that the inside front covers have a printed "This book is the property of . . ." tabulation ready for school borrowing. These books also have the strongest possible neo-Pracism artwork on their covers, suggesting that the publishers have made the traditional connection between drama and Confucian virtues.

Of least interest to the enterprising Australian teacher would be the collections of "readers" plays for students.

Upstairs/Downstairs anthologues play ranging from *The Window Boy* to the screenplay of *The On-Bow London*, and *Margaret* anthologues 10 plays by British and American writers. Chapin's *Mary* appears alongside *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and Packington's *Now* *When* alongside *The Admirable Crichton*. Assuming that the editors are not being humorous in this selection, it is clear that they regard a mixture of works from the media and the theatre. This remains the strongest feature of these collections, which are marked by the label "Author Biographies" and "Discussion Questions" which embrace an antiquated approach to senior drama teaching. One tends to think of successive generations considering the extent to which some of *The Mary* Age is representative, and so on.

Written for a more specific purpose and

therefore perhaps less suspect are two books which provide short scenes from plays as acting exercises. The choice of plays is fairly tame — *The Little Fencer* and *At My Side*, for instance — but in both *30 Scenes for Acting Practice* there is a useful breakdown of roles and a good range of parts to ensure that each student gets the chance to develop his/her acting skills. The two books, both edited by Samuel Elkind of San Francisco State University, direct their attention to specific and, one might say, substantial questions. In the fairly wide margins of the text there are questions asked, sometimes about the tone of voice the actor would use for a particular line and more often about motivation. I take it that these points would not require academic written answers, but would rather give the pupils a series of points on which to base the study of their roles. That, a question, say, about Elkind's tone of voice in misquoting Uncle Vanya could have, we take it, an infinite variety of correct answers in performance. Throughout the books, however, there are as many questions about some of voice that I suspect the altar of a rigidly prescriptive attitude to interpretation. A knowledgeable teacher would have to modify these questions.



In a sense, as with the collections of full plays, these books of scenes could be superfluous to a local drama teacher, who might want more Australian material, and write accordingly. There is something strangely alien about the high seriousness of the scenes and plays chosen.

Of more specific use to both student and

teacher are *Improvisation Handbook* and *Speaking of Theatre*. The first book, another of Professor Elkind's, introduces the reader to problem-solving improvisation through the theory and practice of games, dividing them into physical, mental, trust, support and awareness games. He then moves on to the elaborate formulae of improvising around a theme text — especially *The Mirror*. Here Elkind concentrates on improvisation as a replacement of a text, and his study is no doubt useful for students of acting. But for the more general audience who regard improvisation as an end in itself, there is the implication here that games improvisation is a first step in the development towards performance, surely not an end-in-itself that all drama teachers would consider desirable. It is clear, too, that the student following through the *Improvisation Handbook* will then go on to use his "knowledge" as working as the companion "acting practice" books. I would say that the games sections are by far the most useful in this book, although the "Simon says" and group exercise exercises seem altogether too elementary for a "source" book.

Speaking of Theatre, by Red Meyer and Charlotte Lee, seems to be an immensely useful introduction to the theatre arts, for the complete novice. It might also chapters a current theatre history, acting, movement, rehearsal, technical personnel, costume and makeup, scenery and props, and stage lighting. In some ways it is a "What's Your Way to Theatre-Praxis?" book brightened up with marvellous comments on the variety of theatre, but it will not be a useful textbook. I despair, all the same, at the patronisingly clean-living tone in which these writers of educational drama books speak to their readers. Here this tone is matched by hardly sporting-type pictures of actors posing people in white (and) tight. A picture supposedly illustrating the stage-managers on the prompt-book in fact focuses on two people playing ball. With the exception of the very American parts on makeup and stage lighting, however, this book is a steadily reliable source of information on the theatre.

But this book and indeed the others mentioned sit left me with a feeling of despair at their sheer thoughtlessness. Mindfully designed for the teacher entrained in theatre, I would guess, these books have the disadvantage of the drama (especially the creative drama) class. It would be refreshing to read something not prescriptive but specific — an account of work a specific teacher has done with an identifiable group.



Six times the seventh

Including van Otterloo's version with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra

The name of a version of Beethoven's seventh symphony recorded by the Sydney Symphony Orchestra conducted by Willem van Otterloo (RCA FRL7-0930) compels me to ask why we cannot have first-class recordings of our principal musical ensembles representing them at their best. The performance is not a bad one, it would be quite acceptable in the concert hall. The conductor, a man of tremendous authority and experience, is sometimes open to the charge that he keeps too tight a rein on the orchestra and that his markings are sometimes a little on the staidy or laboured side. That is not an important factor in deciding whether or not you want a copy of this disc. It is true that Otterloo's steady tempo in the finale has something wild and aged to it, but its very insistence does generate a certain grandeur and monumentalism of purpose. If we are talking about matters of interpretation alone, this record disc is an eligible for consideration as almost any other recording of the symphony on the market. There is also no doubt in my mind that Otterloo could have secured a far more exact and finely textured performance if he had been given time to do so, so that the actual representation of the orchestra in terms of recorded sound quality is far below what it could have been.

The record was made in the Sydney music studios of the ABC with the experienced conductor Eric Clapham as producer and Barry Smith as technical operator. I think it would be generally agreed that Eric Clapham is one of the most knowledgeable and experienced of our recording producers of concert-hall music. I know nothing about his relationship during the recording sessions with the conductor or to what extent, if any, he felt constrained by the fact that the recording was being made by the ABC, the organisation which also employs Otterloo and the orchestra. My guess — and this, of course, open to an indignant denial from Eric Clapham — is that neither producer nor conductor had time to go back and re-record passages of the symphony where the ensemble is not completely exact, in which the contrasts of dynamics do not fully fulfil the prescriptions of the score. If we place the slow introduction to the first movement beside the same passage in another recent recording of the symphony, the version played by the Victoria Philhar-

monic Orchestra and conducted by Carlos Kleiber (DGG 2133 704), I can make this point in a little more detail. Comparing the two versions we find immediately that the big horn chords in the Kleiber version are finely focused and as near to unison as is the human imagination or ear can get, the same chords in the 1980 version are not truly together and have a relatively spread and fuzzy sound. In the Kleiber version the bars between the opening horn chords (for four, for example) cover with a sense of anticipation and excitement towards the next big gesture, the Sydney version is accurate but lacking in urgency. The repeated notes and rising scale passages for the strings at bar 10 are marked in my score as *pizzicato*. The Sydney recording presents them as a level approximately that of *mezzo-forte* or, in other words, about two degrees too loud, the Kleiber version is truly hushed and delicate. I must say at this point that there are listeners who have complained that the Kleiber disc is good precisely because its range of dynamics is so great, that its softs are so soft, its highs quite so relatively loud, and it is true that dynamic contrasts of this order are not particularly suited to medium-range hi-fi equipment, which is the kind most generally in use. However, that is a criticism of the equipment, not of the recording. The RCA disc has been clearly aimed at the market defined by middle-of-the-road equipment, and its shortcomings may not seem so evident to owners of this kind. Nevertheless, the tendency in recordings is general to flatten out dynamic contrasts to a comfortable up-my level in one of the distracting fashions that records often perform when they are relied on as a sole source of familiarity with particular works.

When we come to the *glacé* notes, strong and emphatic, with which first and second violins answer each other from bar 13 onwards, we again find the Sydney strings providing a rough average of articulation rather than an agreement on the pitch of the higher notes. This is no way attacking the maintenance of the leading 320-note plays in my opinion the best of all not equal to the best in any other orchestra, and my point is rather that they could play far more readily at times if they were asked to do so. The ABC, in making its own studio recordings and then supplying them to a commercial recording com-

pany such as RCA, is in a very different position from that of a recording company which makes an independent studio recording and which, in the case of the leading European and American orchestras, holds an exclusive recording contract with that orchestra. The recording company is then able to insist on the very highest standards of accuracy because its recording contract, which is usually essential to the orchestra's economy, will not be renewed unless the orchestra supplies the quality it demands.

Continuing our comparison of the introduction to the first movement of the seventh at bar 33 the slow soloist (presumably that excellent player Guy Henderson) sounds suddenly too far forward in relation to his woodwind colleagues and has to be hastily re-centred back into the ensemble. Then the coordination of the woodwind and, in the following bar, of the voices, is not really exact. Listen to the same passage on the DGG recording and on several other versions I shall mention, and you will hear what I mean. The rising passages for first and second violins which I referred to earlier (such numbering of a climax at bar 21, when the first violins play a chord in which the highest note is G above the staff; in the Kleiber version the strings take the climax with like accuracy, the Sydney version of the same passage is a small disappointment, instead of the powerful upward surge that we are expecting, the strength of the notes actually declines).

It would be tedious as well as much too wasteful of space to carry on this sort of bar-by-bar comparison. Perhaps the examples already quoted will be enough to indicate that we are not discussing vague differences of taste and preference about tempo or expression but matters of technique and accuracy. I do not think that the accurate need for the recording is very helpful in making the symphony as vivid as it can be. The big noise sound like blobs, without letting us hear that numerous timbres. Instrumental solos in general seem to be swallowed up in a general greyish. Occasionally the strings stand out from the rest of the ensemble in a way that makes all the more striking the absence of a good balance of timbre in the recording as a whole. The surface of my review copy was not particularly quiet and the pressing as a whole certainly cannot be considered outstanding. I have no wish at all to do down the local product, but the fact is that we are not presenting the 320 on this disc to ourselves or to the rest of the

Annual reports?



world with the advantages of comparative networks continuously improving performance by other networks.

In order to see whether I was being all together too fussy, I turned back to a more recent of the famous version of the seventh symphony recorded by Toscanini with the New York Philharmonic in 1936 (RCA Victor 674-562). Although the sound, even in reproduced form, falls considerably short of the latest standards of fidelity, I found that the purely musical questions of exact intonation, genuine agreement in forte chords were as much at evidence as in the superb new Kleiber version. In fact, it'll have to serve the two versions of the symphony I find most compelling they would be the 1936 Toscanini performance and the recent Kleiber recording on DG. The performance by Soli with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, treated as part of Soli's complete Beethoven symphony series (*Decca SET-6576*), is impressive, but less mature and a less scrupulous observance of dynamics than the Kleiber version. Soli occasionally sounds uncharacteristically relaxed, as if trying to live down something of his reputation for unrelenting drive and hair-trigger precision. The Chicago orchestra is recorded rather heavily, with what I feel is excessive prominence given to the bass.

The most questionable factor of Kleiber's interpretation of the symphony is the breathtaking speed with which he takes the finale. When I heard it first I thought that the orchestra could not possibly maintain it or that the conductor would certainly fail to regain it when he returned to passages similar to the opening bars. In fact, the orchestra played it without the least evidence of desperation and the conductor proved that it is a genuine tempo and not a sign of the moment accident. The chorale tempo, much slower and almost robotically unchanged, is a completely acceptable alternative. It is only the Kleiber version with the Philharmonic Orchestra (*Columbia S&W 342*) which sounds grotesquely laboured by comparison in this movement, that is not to mind the symphony of the dance, as Wagner's over-familiar phrase, as the symphony of the sugar. By comparison, the version directed by Pablo Casals of the awards as a CBS recording made from a live performance at the Melbourne music festival in the United States is relatively free from the quirks of tempo and interpretation it would have expected from this traditional but often wayward and willful musician. I am sure that the view of this disc here has a great deal of point, as to quality of sound and the fine detail of the performance it does not really measure up to the best of the studio recordings. But, as always with a vigorous live performance, there are signs in it which you may find outweigh the defects of consistency. My own preference should be clear. I find the recent Kleiber version on DG, despite its contentious parts, one of the most astounding and electrifying interpretations ever put on disc.

Now is the time for the writing of the annual reports traditional late winter reading.

It's one of the uncelebrated anomalies that most Australian subsidised theatre companies are not compelled to send annual returns to the public, even though it is large dollops of public money that let them survive. All must account to the Australia Council, but those accounts are not available to the public. And a isn't the same thing public scrutiny can't be delegated.

Take the 1976 MTC report. It's a model of its kind.

The MTC is not compelled by law to make an annual report, to make its accounts public. The company has no separate legal existence; it's just a division of Melbourne University. John Sumner, the MTC's director, says the university plays the accounts, and he suggests that shortcomings in their presentation are not the fault of the MTC.

If Melbourne University and the MTC are interested in seeing how they might improve their reports, they should look around the arts world. The Australian Elizabethan Theatre's annual reports have been models of detail and intelligibility, and the Australian Ballet has just brought out a fine annual report for 1976. It's unusually pretty, with a glossy picture of Sir Robert Helpmann as the Fool on the Hill at the opera, but it is detailed and thorough. From it, it's possible to evaluate performance from the MTC's report if's not.

The MTC report is the second the company has issued (the first covered the

calendar year 1975). It's a rough summary of the business the MTC did, without explanatory notes, and with only a minimum of analysis from the MTC's chairman and director. Indeed, John Sumner's and David Darshan's contributions are here and formal in the extreme.

Furthermore, the report was issued annually.

Furthermore (by comparing the 1975 and 1976 reports), it's clear there's been a serious slide in the popularity of the MTC, in the number of seats and in the number of subscriptions sold. This needs to be explained, but no hypothesis is put forward by Sumner or Darshan.

In the end result, the MTC appears to have turned a \$14,000 loss in 1975 into a surplus of \$77,504 in 1976. Remarkable in the circumstances. Again no explanation.

The story of how this surplus was made can only be worked out after persistent foraging. It's not, as it should be, available to the public on the face of the document.

To begin with, the 1976 report can't set out in a way that allows comparison with the 1975 performance. As a matter of habit, most annual reports print current and previous figures side by side. The MTC doesn't. What does it expect the public to read the damn things for if not to see how things are going?

Surplus	1976	1975
	\$77,504	\$14,000

The figures were not computed on the same basis for the two years.

Some time before 1975, the MTC set up a fund to accumulate cash for new premises — for the Australian Theatre

and new workshop headquarters. This fund stood at \$18,000 at the beginning of 1975 and that year a further \$42,901.76 was added. (There's no explanation why this program was not audited.) The money was taken out as expenditures ("a charge against revenue"), with the result that the MTC was able to make a deficit of \$54,000 that year — which the Melbourne University made up with a special grant, squaring the books.

But in the latest annual report, they worked out the surplus and then took their new premises (and some other money out of that) in this way the special fund got its money and the MTC was publicly seen to make that healthy surplus.

So there are two ways of looking at the MTC's record over the last couple of years. First on the 1975 basis:

1976	1975
in (\$)	—\$44,000
appropriated	

Or on the 1976 basis:

1976	1975
\$17,904	\$28,901.76
(assuming new premises appropriated)	

On either basis, the MTC improved its performance, (by this measure) from 1975 to 1976. Thus a final check:

But what became of the 1976 surplus? There's no statement of intention in the accounts. Surplus is all taken into the appropriation account and that's the last we hear of it. The MTC accountant told *Theatre Australia* that the primary purpose of that account was to pay for new premises — but it doesn't say so in the books. And that's a serious omission of detail.

Income

"And actors," says Sumner in the report, "did not pay much more to attend MTC productions..." But they did pay more, and if the report had set out the details, it would be easier for readers to make sense of the rise in mean season box-office receipts.

1976	1975
\$214,244	\$235,944.18

And the improved box office needs to be explained because there was a slump in audiences at the same time:

1976	1975
Pool of audience	224,270
Selected shows seen and	252,348
	193,597
	356,990

Seat prices (for adults on week nights) rose from \$4.40 at the beginning of 1975, to \$6 at the end of 1976. That's a rise of 30 per cent.

Adult subscription prices (for ten shows on week-nights) rose from \$20 to \$26.50. This is a jump of just under 30 per cent.

Inflation is the only obvious problem Sumner mentions in the report. But had the price-cost figures been in the report as well, the public could see that MTC tickets, if

not matching inflation, were hanging on in there.

A little under half the MTC non-salary income comes from subsidy. For some reason, in the 1975 report these subsidies were not detailed, but lumped in as "Grants applied". Sumner says this will be rectified in the next report. It should have read:

	1976	1975
Arts Council	\$265,094	\$494,000
Vict. State Govt.	\$293,000	\$120,000
Melb. City		
Council	\$5,000	\$1,000
Melb. Un.	\$12,000	\$14,000
Total	\$565,094	\$717,000

Subsidies rose more than 20 per cent. It's clear from the 1976 booklet that someone needs to pay the heat into Melbourne City Council and Melbourne University.

Here the report is particularly difficult to follow.

In 1975, the report was drawn up showing expenditures for Russell, Sumner and St Martin's seasons, broken down into 38 distinct groups under its subheading. From that it was possible to see in some detail how the MTC as a production and administration body worked. The figures were helpful.

In the latest report, expenditures is listed in only 13 items, grouped under two sub-headings (salaries and costs). The figures tell very little, and comparisons between the two years are difficult. What's more the 13 items bear titles that make it hard to understand what they mean. Here is the public to distinguish between show Production Costs (\$24,215) and Production Costs (\$1.48,703)?

The report should include notes to explain what these comparisons refer to. The MTC accountant explained that the first line in the cost of specific productions, and the second the annual cost of production facilities. He cleared up further difficulties.

"Creative salaries" means salaries for designers, directors, play readers, tutors, lighting designers, and literary advisors.

"Manufacturing salaries" means salaries for scenery-builders, prop and wig-makers, wardrobe and millinery.

Total expenditures (all seasons) rose very sharply.

1976	1975
\$1,284,423	\$1,581,136.35

Broken down on the rough 1976 basis (unfortunately the only one possible), the figures show:

	1976	1975
Salaries	\$1,165,714	\$1,464,550.11
Non-salaries	\$118,709	\$161,101.28

For all Sumner's talk of a labour-intensive industry "beset by inflation with 'unreasonable wage rises'", it's clear that,

in actual fact, it was his costs (not his salary) that rose (up by a third) rather than his wages (up by about a tenth). Salaries.

Getting a small surplus from the MTC budget last year was only possible by loading down wages. A considerable effort, it seems, but a closer examination of the salary figures shows how John Sumner achieved this — by not the art-subsidies.

	1976	1975
Artistic Salaries		
season, creative manufacturing	\$264,254	\$294,175.06

In inflation-riddled times he actually managed to get the artistic salaries of the MTC down. And the acting profession bore the brunt of it: payments to actors fell about \$43,540. When Sumner says in his report that the programme for 1976 "consisted of mainly anti-inflation plays primarily through lack of money to pay large casts", this is what he meant. From his point of view, it was a highly successful budgetary exercise.

Other MTC wages rose publicly staff by about \$17,500, theatre staff by about \$11,500, and management hardly touch with what appears a rise of about \$5,000. Great Street.

This is not the time to argue the pros and cons of the Great Street venture. In the annual report it is listed as contributing a loss of \$24,601 to the MTC's results.

This considerably understates the true loss incurred by Great Street. None of the costs of promotion or administration of the little experimental theatre were put down to an account, nor did it have to bear any part of "salaries" or "manufacturing" salaries.

The accountant at the MTC said "It might be reasonable to add something to the \$24,601 to get the true loss, but I think you'll agree it looks bad enough as it is." Who could disagree?

General Position

By slashing creative salaries, and with actor prices, subscriptions and subsidies all rising by roughly 30 per cent, the MTC was able to hold its own against inflation. Non-salary costs appear to have got out of hand. Had audiences been up to 1975 levels, the strategy would have prevented Sumner with a far larger surplus to pursue his long-range plans of gaining the Athenaeum and new workshop facilities. He is now going to have to get a large amount of cash from the current budget. 1976 fell back with this handicap for 1977.

The MTC report gives only an income-and-expenditure statement. It's not a full balance sheet of the sort that public companies are supposed to publish: it doesn't have details of the MTC's assets and liabilities. These are not available from the company and we cannot guess how heavily (if at all) the company is indebted, nor does the report give a clue about what assets the MTC has and what it's doing with them. These figures are available only to the Australia Council.

GUIDE



ACT

CANBERRA PLAYHOUSE (06 6486)
White The Sky: Solo, an evening with
 Henry Lawson and Leonard Teale 2-13
 August

CANBERRA THEATRE (06 6211)
Sector in Love, produced by Gary van
 Dymond and Paul Davys, with Robin
 Nuddell and Geoffrey Durn 2-13 August

HERSCHEL THEATRE RESTAURANT, Macquarie (31 3111)
Crimes of a Lifetime, by Ross Fraser and
 John McKellar. Directed by James
 Handman, with Robert Corwen, Doug
 Williams and Mary Yvonne (continuing)

THEATRE THREE (47 4222)
Tango Theatre
Once Upon A Macquarie, a Musical
 directed by Joyce MacFarlane. To 5
 August
Drama Festival of Overcast Plays 12-14
 and 19-21 August



NEW SOUTH WALES

AUTUMN COMPANY (666 2303)
The Jack of Diamonds, by Tony Wright
 and Meg Alvey, directed by Tony Wright
 (Gillmore's production) 29 Aug. to 10 Sept.
City Saver, by Stephen Polaskoff, directed
 by Michael Kelly, and
Ghost, by Henrik Ibsen, directed by
 Matthew O'Sullivan. Playing in repertory
 from 7 Sept.

ALBURY CIVIC THEATRE
The Merry Widow (Italian) in English 12,
 13 Aug. Canberra Opera Production. Con-
 ductor, David Colburn, producer, Nina
 Cooke, set designs, Paul Kuthers, costu-
 mes courtesy Australian Opera. With
 Laurence Haines, Colin Shiner, Gary
 Walbrook. In Smith, Phil O'Brien.

**ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH
 WALES** (31 6611)
The Duke Woodcock and Puppets Holi-
 day. Continuing on primary schools tour

of south coast and Riverina to 26 Aug.
Hells, I'm Gerry Anderson, folk singer and
 more artist. Continuing on primary
 schools tour in Sydney metropolitan area
 to 26 Aug.

New England Ensemble, chamber music
 trio comprising Andrew Latham, Robert
 Harris, James Laurs. Primary schools tour
 of Hunter region 8 to 13 Aug.

AUSTRALIAN OPERA (36 3916)
 Sydney Opera House (2 0388)

Opera Theatre: Five Operas (Austrian) in
 English 1, 3 Aug. 13 Aug. (mat), 2, 5
 Sept., 10 Sept. (eve) Conductor, Peter
 Rabinman. With Robert Gird, Dennis
 Olsen, Heather Beggart Jeanne For
 Birmingham, Aaron Austin or Henri

Wilder Grant Dickson, Isolde Beckman,
 Gwyneth Easter, Noel Warren-Smith.

Macbeth (Scott) in Italian 4 Aug., 6 Aug.
 (mat), 10 Aug. 13 Aug. (mat), 13, 17 Aug.,
 20 Aug. (eve), 23, 26, 28 Aug. 1 Sept., 3
 Sept. (mat), 7 Sept., 10 Sept. (mat) Con-
 ductor, John Pritchard or Carlo Felice
 Cillario, With Elizabeth Connell, John
 Shaw, Raymond Byrne or Lamborn
 Italian, Paul Ferris or Aaron Austin,
 Donald Shanks or Clifford Grant

Can/An Teller (Mozart) in English 19, 21,
 24 Aug. Conductor, John Pritchard.

With Joan Jordan, Jennifer
 Birmingham, Cynthia Johnston, Helen
 Walden, John Fringola, Ronald
 Macgregor

The Flying Dutchman (Wagner) in Ger-
 man 31 Aug., Sept. 3 (eve), 6, 8, 9 Sept.
 Conductor, Carlo Felice Cillario.

With Robert Allan as Ray-
 mond Myths, Lone Koppel-Wunder or
 Susan Grant, Emma Rasebeck or Lindsay
 Roberts, Ronald Dowd as Ragnald Byrne,
 Robin Donald, Noel Warren-Smith or
 Donald Shanks

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE, Newtown
 (51 1641)

The Glass Menagerie, by Tennessee
 Williams. An Open Theatre Group
 production produced by Frank Hahn,
 directed by Bill Arlison, designed by Les
 Jennings. With Barbara Menrod, Stephen
 Harrington, Jane Abigail, Paul Gilbert.
 Continuing

The Core is Green, by Evelyn Williams,
 a Bellina 666 Drama School production 24
 and 25 July only

**AUSTRALIAN THEATRE FOR
 YOUNG PEOPLE** (666 1621)

Workshops at NIDA. Saturdays, 10 a.m.
 to 1 p.m., to end of year

BONDI PAVILION THEATRE
 (36 1211 or 29 6333)

The Winter Readings Eight Australian
 plays from the National Playwrights Con-
 ference in Canberra. To 9 Aug.

ENSEMBLE (029 8875)

Boy Meets Girl, by Bette and Samuel
 Speech, directed by Hayes Jordan,
 designed by Doug Anderson. Continuing

GENESIAN (027 3023)

A Man For All Seasons, by Robert Bolt,
 directed and designed by Colleen Clifford,
 with Michael Bower, Elizabeth Saria,
 Louise Butler, Dennis Allen. To 8 Aug.
The Unanswered Question, by Agathe
 Christie, directed and designed by Ray
 Aspinforth. From 13 Aug.

HER MAJESTY'S (312 3415)

A Chorus Line, original production con-
 ceived, choreographed and directed by
 Michael Bennett, co-choreographer, Bob
 Aron, book by James Kirkwood and
 Nicholas Dante, music by Marvin Hame-
 lish, lyrics by Edward Kleban, choreog-
 raphy and direction recreated for
 Australia by Marybeth Lee and Jeff
 Henthall. Cast of 30. Continuing

JANE STREET (663 3124)

Don't Pull Against The Wind, More, by
 Kenneth G. Ross, directed by John
 Tucker, designed by Bill Pritchard. With
 Bob Graham, Nora Macdonald, Maggie
 Kirkpatrick, John Pittman. To 9 Aug.

KILLARA 666 COFFEE THEATRE
 (666 7322)

Radio London, directed by John Howard,
 with John Howard, Peter Parkhouse,
 Cherie Popp. Continuing

MARIAN STREET (496 3666)

Confessions, a new comedy by Alan
 Ayckbourne, directed by Ted Craig,
 designed by Brian Mackison. With Kerry
 Walker, Louise Tate, Barry Lowit, Philip
 Hinton, Trevor Kent. To 17 Aug.
A Joy March, by Martha Wirth and Peter
 Yekkers. From 1 Sept.

**MARIONETTE THEATRE OF
 AUSTRALIA** (337 1636)

Rose, written and directed by Richard
 Bradshaw, and *Hand*, directed by the com-
 pany and directed by Richard Bradshaw.
 Schools tour, Sydney area, to 28 Aug.;
 coast suburban schools holiday season, 28
 Aug. to 9 Sept.

MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (08 8222)

Last for Power at Perth at Parramatta, written and directed by Michael Boddy, with Allan Harvey, John Allen, Ariele Senior Continuing

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE RESTAURANT (073 6585)

The Glass Dove Show, produced by William Orr, with Bryan Brown, W.P. Bennett, David Gribben Continuing

NEW THEATRE (310 1403)

Enter a Free Man, by Tom Stoppard directed by Paul Quinn, designed by Andrew Blackwell With Mandy O'Neil, Betty Milnes, Anastasia Blackwell, Dominic Smith, Brian Hineswood, Ricki McDonald, Dick May, Stan Rait, Toine August

Capitaine de Kopenick, by Carl Zuckmayer, directed by Jack Levy. From early September

NIMROD (68 3003)

Upstairs George Waver, by Alma de Green, directed by Richard Wherrett, designed by Ian Robinson With Mandy Hayes, Chris Haywood, Gary Day, James Elliott, Catherine Wilson To 10 Sept

Downstairs A Sketch of the Assassination, by Jack Hibbard, an Australian Performing Group production One-man show starring Mimi Gribben Continuing

OLD TOTE (663 6125)

Drama Theatre, Opera House The Three Sisters, by Anton Chekhov, directed by Bill Robinson, designed by James Redwood With Jacki Warren, Jennifer Clarke, Monica Mayhew, Elizabeth Alexander To 30 Aug

The Time Is Not Yet Alike, by Louis Esch, directed by Peter Collingswood, designed by Anne Fraser From 7 Sept

Parade Theatre Big Top, by Patrick White, directed by Joe Scarnozzi, designed by Brian Tansley With Kate Fitzpatrick, Arthur O'Sullivan, Max Cohen Continuing

York Theatre Seymour Centre The Norman Conquests (Table Manners, Living Together and Round and Round the Garden), by Alan Ayckbourn, directed by Robert Quinn, designed by Larry Lawwood With Alan Tabin, Tony Llewellyn-Jones, Peter Adams, Warren Long, Jennifer Hayes, John Fatt Trilogy playing its repertory from 3 Aug

OSCAR'S HOLLYWOOD PALACE THEATRE RESTAURANT, Sans Souci (529 4425)

Fit (Silver Salaries), written and directed by Joe Fendryns (continuing)

QTHEATRE, Parrish (043 21 3735)

Engaged, by W.S. Gilbert, directed by Kevin Jackson, designed by Arthur Decker With Ron Rodger, Ron Hickman, Lee Taylor, London Wilkinson, Vela Vaandier At Railway Institute, Parrish, 3 to 14 Aug and 31 Aug to 4 Sept, Civic Centre, Bankstown, 17 to 21 Aug, Mazzoni Rehabilitation Centre, Parramatta, 24 to 26 Aug

RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY, Wagga (264 21 3134)

Mark Add About Nothing by William Shakespeare, directed by Terry O'Connell 4-7 and 10-13 Aug There will also be one *Synapse* in Concert performance during this season

ST JAMES LUNCHEON PLAYHOUSE (512 8570)

Don't Go Near The Judge, Miss Jenkins, by David Barman, directed by Peter Williams, with Kay Elford and Trevor Prior To 5 Aug

Sarah and the Sea, by John Lewis Collins, directed by Peter Williams, starring Valerie Newman 5 Aug to 9 Sept

SEYMOUR CENTRE (693 0334)

The Settlements Rule, based on the C.J. Dennis character, by Albert Arlan and Nancy Brown Presented by the Catholic Teachers College, produced by Gaila Keadell, musical director Jon Forsythe, production based on original designs by Cathie Flower for Theatre Royal, Sydney, 1980 With Allan Blomch to the Bluke, Joanne McIlhenny in Doreen, Terry de Lane and Wendy Williams Everett Theatre, 11 to 20 Aug

Downstairs Top in the Ark, by Lilian Hillman Presented by the Lane Cove Players, directed by Jennifer Williams, sets by Graeme Webb, costumes by Marilyn Baskery, lighting by Lionel Williams With Nan Free, Margaret Thompson, Wal Moore, Sue Pennington, Anne Egan, Norman Turkington 2 to 6 Aug

Greater Energy Youth Dance Group 8 to 13 Aug

City Road Youth Theatre 29 Aug to 3 Sept

Sydney University Dramatic Society From 5 Sept

SPEAKEASY THEATRE RESTAURANT, Kensington (663 7462)

The Big Bang Show, conceived by Hugh Rale and Bryan Brown, directed by Hugh Rale, designed by Cliff Sennett With Peter Carlisle, Ross Stamp, John Esart, Tim Burall, Victoria Nicolls, Douglas Kingman Continuing

THEATRE ROYAL (231 6377 or 331 6111)

Saving Anwar, by Marc Camoletti, adapted from the French by Beverly Cross, directed by Doug Fisher, designed by Bill Dowd, starring Richard O'Sullivan, with Doug Fisher, Shirley Cameron, Kate Seed, Judith Woodroffe Continuing

WHITE HORSE HOTEL, Newtown (31 1032)

The Little Coffee Pottery, by Rick Meier, Malcolm Frevelay and Patricia Kirby, conceived and directed by Ian Tinker and Hugh Rale, with Jennifer McGregor, Doug Scarp, Lyn Parkinson, Geoff Dudwell, Peter Fisher Continuing



QUEENSLAND

ARTS THEATRE (36 3344)

The Golden Legend of Charming Women by Alan Haggard Director, Jay McKee, designer, Jason Savage With Owen Smith, Joan Turner, Peter Pearce, Audrey Thompson Open 4 Aug (Weds-Sat)

Children's Matinee Dick Whittington and His Cat written and directed by Gordon Shaw Sets to 16 Aug, 4th Suite by Jason Savage Productions 15-27 Aug

LABOETH (34 1912)

The Gift by Michael Carr Director, Brian Houston To 6 Aug

Howers and Adels by William Shakespeare Director, Jennifer Macdonald With Graeme Hutton, Pete Gottschalk, Michael McCaffrey, Ruth Prescott, Fred Wherry, Graeme Johnston, Glenella Smith Theatre Sets 12-17 Aug

The Chinese Menu by Sam Shepherd Director, Su Parker 21, 23, 24, 26, 28, 30, 31 Aug

CANERATA (34 6551) Avalon Theatre
Little Epiphany by Henrik Ibsen Director, Shirley Lambert To 20 Aug (Thurs-Sat)

COMMUNITY (334 9311) A/H 316 9936

The Fellowship by Tom Jones and Sherry Ackerson Director, Greg Katschman, Musical Director, Greg Moore With Paul Payne To 6 Aug

FESTIVAL HALL (229 4442)

Guile Nonsense with Linda Fielded Baller Company Michael Delany and J.C. Williamson Productions presentation 15-20 Aug

HER MAJESTY'S (231 2777)

John Arden's In Concert, Graham Productions 3-5 Aug

Marcel Marceau, Michael Ingley International 8-13 Aug

The Grand Adventure (sponsored), Theatre Savage 15-23 Aug

Tchadka Comicals, Queensland Arts Council 16-17 Aug

Sold Out in Concert, Evans/Geddes Productions 29 Aug

LIVING ROOM THEATRE RESTAURANT (331 3885)

The Spaniard Who Sighted My Life, directed and designed by Frank Meach, musical director, Sean Smyth With Brian Tait and Sheila Bradley Continuing

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (231 3177)

So Goes by George Bernard Shaw Director, Joe MacCormack, designer, Peter Cooke With Kate Wilson To Aug 6

The Snow Hat by Thomas Mauthner

Director, Rufus Levey; designer, James Rudewood. With Rue Hadden. Opens 24 Aug.



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIAN DANCE COMPANY
Country tour till 13 Aug.

BOX FACTORY

Women's Art Movement theatre workshop. Aug. 6, 7. (Theatre workshops, adult puppet, theatre, new plays by women.)

FESTIVAL CENTRE (51 2292)

Festival Theatre.
Grease, Romeo and Juliet, The London Festival Ballet. With Rudolf Nureyev. 1-6 Aug.

Opera: Australian Ballet Company with Margot Fonteyn. 17-23 Aug.

Les Femmes, Monkey in a Cage, Billy the Kid. Australian Ballet Company with Margot Fonteyn. 23-30 Aug.

Spice.
The Abode by Alex Hay To 13 Aug.
Playhouse SATC.

Q THEATRE (221 5611)

The Appearance of Being Serious by Oscar Wilde. 3-26 Aug.

STATE OPERA (312 3738 or 312 3366)
Festival Theatre (51 2291).

MAT'S Playhouse (Gilbert and Sullivan) from 18 Sept. Conductor, Nyer Friedman, director, Adrian Slack, designer, Ben Cooper. With Edward Woodward as Sir Joseph Porter, Patsy Henshaw as Josephine, Thomas Edwards, John Wood, David Branson, Norma Knight, Krish Thompson.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN THEATRE COMPANY (51 3133)

Playhouse.
Parsons' Theatre? Marcus Street Productions. Gilbert and Sullivan revue. Director, Tod Craig. To 13 Aug.
Amor Gi' Your Gun by Irving Berlin. Book by Herbert Fields and Dorothy Fields. Director, Colin George, designer, Rodney Ford. With Dorothy Tennet and Bruce Barry. Opens 15 Aug.



TASMANIA

THEATRE ROYAL, Hobart (34 6286)

Tasmanian Opera Company.
Gaiety; 3 one-act operas. 1-14 Aug.
Tasmanian Puppet Theatre (23 7996).
Lulu by Peter Peter written and directed by John Blackall. 15-30 Aug.

The Tossers and All That Jazz, a musical production with John Deedrich, Caroline Gilman and John GPMay. Musical Director, Michael Truick, choreography, John Fitzgerald, design, Trish Parker, presented by J.C. Williamson Productions Ltd, Michael Edgley International Pty Ltd, and the Tasmanian Theatre Company. 22 Aug.-3 Sept.



VICTORIA

ALEXANDER THEATRE (243 2828)

The Cavalier directed by Peter O'Brien for the Alexander Theatre Company, in association with Hoopla Productions. To 26 Aug.

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (M77851)

From Factory, From Theatre.
The Radioactive Mirror Show by John Bennett and the Group. To 21 Aug. Re-titled season of Jack Hibbert's *The Stretch of the Imagination*. From 24 Aug.
From Factory, Back Theatre.
At 11 p.m.: *Evening of Theatre Songs*, with Evelyn Krupp, Tony Taylor and Clara Bellini.

COMEDY THEATRE (243 3311)

James Partridge by Mike Stone, directed by Jeffrey Corbitt, designed by Patrick Robertson. With George Layton and Bruce Sprue. Presented by J.C. Williamson Productions Ltd, and Michael Edgley International Pty Ltd. From 3 Aug.

THE HOOPLA THEATRE FOUNDATION

Playbox Theatre (62 4888).
The Education of Benjamin Franklin by Sam J. Sparks, directed by Richard Wharmby, designed by Larry Eastwood, with Gordon Chater. Presented by Pan-chatic Productions.

LA MANA (361 6085)

Torch Anniversary Festival.
LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (499 6236).
Water, *There's a Circle in My Soap*, directed by Gary Parsons.

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (243 1180)

Admission.
The Merchant of Venice, directed by John Sumner. Designed by Kristian Peckhams. Russell Street.

The Club by David Williamson. Directed by Rodney Fisher, designed by Simon Gorton. Throughout August.

St Martin's.
And by David Radwin. From 4 Aug.
Theatre in Education.
Life Is or Less D. Scarnio by Jonathan

Handy. *The Archaic Room* by John Powers. Director, Greg Sibson. *Man Friday* by Adrian Mitchell. Directed and designed by Robert Lowe. Companies A and B. Melbourne and Metropolitan areas.

PRINCESS THEATRE

Wonderwoman, by Reg Livermore, directed by Peter Beely. Presented by Eric Dart. From 16 Aug.

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (262 3211)

Marcel Marceau, presented by Michael Edgley International Pty Ltd in association with Derek Glynn. To 4 Aug. (Doesn't include further August bookings for Her Maj.)

VICTORIA STATE OPERA (41 3064)

Paper and Flowers and Pampas, in *The Three Lovers of Penelope* by Peter Narrooy. Continuing on schools tour, Melbourne metropolitan area.

WINDSOR REGES (51 9979)

Son of Nephew by Tony Sattler and Gary Riley.



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

HOLE IN THE WALL (61 2403)

Marcello Fovers by Alexander Ross. Directed Ariele Nemo. Playhouse production. 27 July-30 Aug.
Each day: *Journey into Night* by Eugene O'Neill. Director, Raymond Gosselin. 24 Aug.-24 Sept.

PLAYHOUSE (23 3508)

Marcello Fovers - see Hole in the Wall. Gilbert and Sullivan Society double bill. *RSSV* by Offenbach and *HMS Pinafore*. 28 July-8 Aug.
Double Edge by Leslie Duxson and Peter Whelan. 25 Aug.-17 Sept.
T.I.E., Capital in Transit by Simon Hopkinson. *Flower* by Brian Friel. Dawson, Andrew Ross. Available for booking.

REGAL THEATRE (24 8337)

Tasmanian? Formosa? Gilbert and Sullivan musical revue by Ian Taylor. Director, Ted Craig, designer, David Branson. With Jon Ewing and John Francis. Presented by the Australian Elizabethan Trust in association with the M.L. Centre, Paul Elton and Marcus Street Theatre. 15-27 Aug.

THEATRE-OO-ROUND. WAIT (68 3511)

Luncheon productions. *Tom Thumb* by Fielding, *The Dog* by Vivian Stanshall. *Marking in Tasmania* by Don Malachuk.

CIVIC THEATRE RESTAURANT (72 1285)

The Five Feet Four Show with Joan Sydney and John Reame.

And next month

THEATRE AUSTRALIA looks at Musicals in Australia from the turn of the century to today; discusses regional theatre; gives a blow by blow account of Macbeth: Verdi v. Shakespeare; considers the passing of "The Independent"; surveys Opera and Dance as usual; contains insightful reviews on productions throughout the country and much, much, more...

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Australia Council

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The Theatre Board has limited funds available for development and training projects in dance, drama, mime and puppetry for 1978

Professional and creative organisations and individuals are invited to apply for assistance for special projects, including those of an experimental or community-oriented kind

Professional companies are invited to apply for assistance in the implementation of basic and advanced training programs within Australia.

Application forms and information booklets obtainable from:

The Secretary
Theatre Board
Australia Council
P.O. Box 301
NORTH SYDNEY, N.S.W. 2060

Telephone enquiries to The Theatre Board, Sydney 922 2122.

Applications close 30 September, 1977 for decisions by mid December 1977, and 15 February, 1978 for decisions by 30 April, 1978